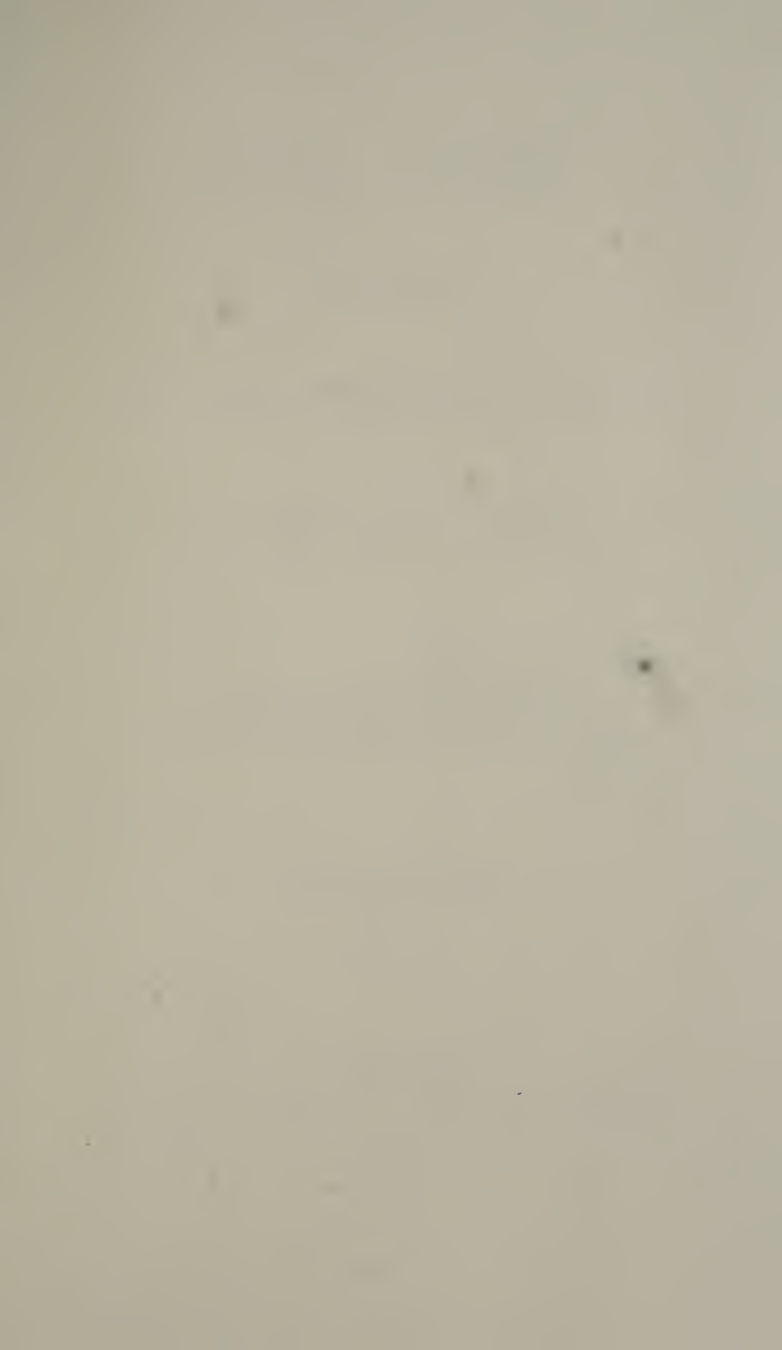


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CECIL, A PEER,

A SEQUEL TO

CECIL, OR THE ADVENTURES OF A COXCOMB.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

“LOCUS EST ET PLURIBUS UMBRIS,”

“A frame containing sketches of the world and its wife.”

HORACE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

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P R E F A C E.

It is impossible to be sure that, in these days of general mistrust, the atheism of the Public may not extend to a doubt of my identity.—Let the perusal of a few pages suffice to prove that if Ulysses alone could bend the bow of Ulysses, there is but one CECIL to wield the peacock's-quill of CECIL!—

I have a great deal more to say for myself; but it has been so charmingly said of late by the most brilliant of modern French writers, in a review of my memoirs, that I presume to wind up my Preface with his judicious periods.—

“ ‘CECIL’ est en effet une composition dont le genre n'était indiqué dans aucune rhétorique; c'était une bizarrerie nouvelle, même comme bizarrerie; c'était le plus singulier pêle-mêle de bon sens et de paradoxes, de probité et d'ésprit d'enthousiasme et d'ironie, qui fut jamais. Cette fois, les caprices d'Arioste, lorsqu'il brise d'une façon si charmante les divers épisodes de son poème pour les reprendre à mille lieues plus loin

quand reviendra leur tour, étaient complètement dépassés.

“ Dans cette histoire, pas un récit n’est entier, pas un dialogue ; tout se brise tout à la fois ; le fil de l’histoire échappe à chaque instant aux mains du lecteur le plus attentif à le saisir. Pour écrire un pareil livre, il a fallu oublier toutes les règles établies, donner un démenti à tous les usages reçus, affronter tous les périls, toutes les hardiesses, et même quelque chose au delà.

“ A voir tout d’abord cet amoncellement de matériaux sans consistance,—à suivre cette rêverie flottante çà et là dans le plus nébuleux des hasards, à se rappeler ces caprices infinis d’une imagination que rien n’arrête, ni les fleuves, ni les montagnes, on reste ébloui, confondu, hébété, et l’on se demande si l’on n’est pas la dupe de quelque bouffon.

“ Oui !—mais au fond de cet abîme, dans ce chaos tourmenté, vous voyez surgir de temps à autre d’utiles enseignements, de nobles pensées, des drames touchants et simples, d’éloquents protestations en faveur de l’espèce humaine, trop souvent accusée. Le nuage, sans nul doute, le nuage vous fatigue ; la montagne est rude à gravir ; mais aussi, une fois arrivé sur les hauteurs, le nuage s’abaisse à vos pieds, et, du haut de la montagne, vous découvrez tout le paysage d’alentour. Ce livre vous produit l’effet de ces conversations tumultu-

euses qui n'ont ni commencement ni fin, mais dont le milieu est souvent rempli d'agréments et d'instruction. D'abord chacun dit son mot au hasard, selon sa nature ou son émotion personnelle ; bientôt on se débat à outrance, on réplique à son voisin sans l'avoir entendu ; toutes les opinions contradictoires se heurtent et s'entrechoquent ; mais enfin arrive l'homme sage de la bande ; il parle avec plus de modération et de simplicité que les autres, et, par cela même, on l'écoute. Après quoi, lorsque celui-là a parlé, les tumultueux ont de nouveau leur tour, et la conversation s'achève aussi follement qu'elle a commencé. Tel fut l'effet produit à la première apparition de "CECIL." On commença par n'y rien comprendre ; on y trouva ensuite un grand charme, parce qu'on y comprenait quelque chose ; après quoi, en finit par dire qu'on n'y comprenait plus rien. Les critiques furent violentes, les éloges furent passionnés ; une véritable bataille littéraire se livra autour de cette espèce d'apocalypse romanesque. Les uns disaient que c'était un livre charmant, d'une finesse et d'une grâce accomplies ; les autres, que c'était un livre pédantesque, lourd, diffus et difforme. Ceux-ci se récriaient sur la folle gaieté, sur l'admirable bonne humeur de ce bouffon ; les autres soutenaient, au contraire, que ce livre valait surtout par le pathétique des situations, par l'intérêt tout-

puissant du drame, par les larmes qu'il faisait répandre.—C'est un vil bouffon, disaient les graves ecclésiastiques, c'est un drôle adorable, s'écriaient les jeunes beaux esprits de la cour.—Eh bien ! les ecclésiastiques et les courtisans, les critiques et les défenseurs, ils avaient tous raison, les uns et les autres : car ce livre était tout cela, bouffon jusqu'à la folie, satirique jusqu'à la folie, pathétique jusqu'aux larmes.”

The Edinburgh Review did me noble justice.—The above extract contains the tribute of the Débats.—It remains to be proved *who* next, among the Judges' Trumpeters, will immortalize *himself* by becoming sponsor for the immortality of

ORMINGTON.

CECIL.

CHAPTER I.

Il y a fagots et fagots ; et pour ceux que je fais !—MOLIERE.

Somnia sunt non docentis, sed optantis.—CIC.

It is a trying situation for a fellow who has contented himself for the first fifty years of his life with the slender honours of coterie renown, the fame dispensed through a flageolet rather than a trumpet, to wake one morning, like Byron after the publication of *Childe Harold*, “and find himself famous.”

When I took compassion on the dulness of the British public so far as to confide to it the adventures of my days of coxcombry, I enjoyed

only the reputation of being an expert pyrotechnist of those flashy squibs and crackers which irradiate the dulness of White's bay window on a rainy day; a dining-out man, good enough to fill a place when Alvanley or Rokeby,—Sydney or Sneyd,—were not to be had; and was then a wit among lords, as I am now a lord among wits.

My name, however, has become European. The critics, astounded by the vigour of my style and universality of my knowledge, have decided me to be, like Mrs. Malaprop's Cerberus, “three gentlemen in one;”—while the prattlers of May Fair, having been assured that I wear a gown, hail me as of epicene gender.

Sinking under the weight of such commendations, dear Public, I appear before you covered with blushes. Like some popular dancer summoned to the front of the stage by the thunders of your applause, I advance trembling lest the grace of my three bows of acknowledgment should be deteriorated by the pitiless

storm of bouquets pelting over my head ; placing my hand on the spot where hearts are said to be, to abide your verdict.

Once fairly before you, however, the foot-lights of publicity blazing at my feet,—the chandeliers gleaming above,—and three tiers of beauty and fashion cheering me by their plaudits,—the gods waiving their handkerchiefs, the pit its scruples,—I feel the divinity stir within me !—My blushes subside !—Cis Danby is himself again !—“ my foot is on my native heath, and my name is Macgregor !”

Meanwhile I trust others are not as sick as myself of the sound of my name. The way in which society has been be-Cecilled for the last six months, is really overpowering. Multiform as the cloud of Polonius, I have been pointed out to myself at all the parties of the season,

Wearing strange shapes, and bearing many names !

Methinks there have been *ten* Cecils in the field ; and had I much faith in the doctrine

of wraiths and fetches, must long ago have died of consternation, under the influence of apparitions of “the Author of Cecil.” Some week ago, I sat by myself at a Greenwich dinner which my other self was invited to amuse;—and a deuced stupid fellow I was!

On the other hand, if proof against terrors of the Bodach Glas, I have run some risk of being bored to death by disclaimers of the authorship in question. Scarcely a scribbler about town but has essayed to prove to me, in nineteen sections of prose, that *he* was incapable of producing so silly a book as “Cecil,” and that his Club accused him wrongfully;—that “if he *had* stooped to write a novel, he trusted it would not have turned out quite so inartistic a production;

A mighty maze, and all without a plan!

without plot, — design, — arrangement, — and with very little moral!” One and all, in short, pride themselves on the conviction that *they* should have produced a Paternoster Row legi-

timate, in the style of James;—while my discursive *illegitimate* was avowedly a loose string of pearls, in the style of Howell and James;—
“*inest sua gratia parvis!*”

The Gods give them joy of their taste!—There are authors enough and to spare who write books regulation-wise; but for my part, I do not pretend to be in the regulars. I am a Guerrilla—a backwoodsman—any thing rather than a gentleman who prattles belles lettres for the delectation of Grosvenor Square, and does small literature for the *Annals*. As to your historical three volume novels per rule and compass, with a beginning, an end, and a middle, it strikes me that there is beginning to be no end to them, and they are all middling.

I shall consequently continue to tell my story as I think proper. I consider myself a sort of Moor of Venice, relating my adventures; and the Public, my gentle Desdemona, “giving me for my pains a world of sighs,”

besides a smile or two pretty particularly well worth having.

But it is time, as the man observed who went to see the School for Scandal, that we “should stop talking and begin the play.”

And now, as the Princess Scheherazade used to say, “Where did I leave off?”—I think, I told you, Beloved Public,—yes, I *certainly* told you, that I had deigned to accept an appointment in the household of George IV., and become a bullion tassel on the garment of royalty. It was an auspicious moment for that sort of gold-lace existence. As in the exhausted receiver of an air-pump all bodies possess equal weight, and a feather has the same importance as a guinea, in the factitious atmosphere of the court of Carlton House, Cecil Danby and Castlereagh,—(great *Cas. bien entendu*)—Jack Harris and the Duke of Wellington—maintained pretty nearly the same specific gravity.

I know not whether my colleagues regarded

the affair in so philosophical a point of view as myself; for we kept up the same plausibilities towards each other in public as monks of a confraternity when they meet in the street, or as the fellows who “honourable gentleman” each other in a place where they are “*all* honourable men.”—From the Lord Chamberlain down to the smallest equerry, we were well-padded, well-spoken, individuals; who went through the Ko-Too of courtly life with the decent gravity of office;—exhibiting the same arduous zeal about the shaping of a waistcoat or gilding of a console, as Burleigh for the signature of a treaty, or Marlborough for the opening of a campaign;—for when the Sovereign is a man of fashion, it is manifestly the duty of his Courtiers to be fribbles.

We bored ourselves however very little with London. Having scarcely a house over our royal heads in the capital, we took refuge from “vulgar Pall Mall’s oratorio of hisses” and the rotten apples of Charing Cross, in the

happy privacy of our royal country seat; by which judicious retirement, George IV. established himself high in the list of philosophical Kings.

It is clearly the duty of every enlightened monarch to concentrate and display in the highest degree, in his proper person, the national characteristics of his realm. In Spain, it is the business of His most Catholic Majesty to embroider petticoats for the Virgin, like Ferdinand; and suffer himself to be stifled by a brazier rather than violate the laws of etiquette by having it removed by hands not officially qualified for the task. In France, where “*what seems* its head the likeness of a kingly crown has on,” the citizen King should wear worsted epaulettes and assume the contour of a Marylebone Volunteer, good-humoured, hearty, and family-mannish,—while agitating in secret a thousand far-sighted plans,—joining in the chorus of the Marseillaise, and keeping a spiked iron-collar round the neck of his house dog.

In Turkey,—but it is scarcely safe to talk about concentrated essence of Mussulmaun ; and without further prolixities, I hasten to conclude that, in a country where every man's house is his castle,—where exclusion and exclusiveness form the general principle,—where the public monuments are shut up,—the churches closed,—and the grand object of every landed proprietor is to wall out or plant out all possibility of being overlooked by the public, it is the distinctive virtue of the throne to be mysteriously unapproachable.

A king of England should possess the ring of Gyges ;—a queen should be the Invisible Girl. Their voices should reach the public, like faint and winged echoes ; and when laid in the tomb, it should be in the heart of some Cheopsian pyramid, where it would require the lapse of centuries to make out their remains.

This would be strictly in accordance with the spirit of the national character of a metropolis where next door neighbours, so far

from loving each other as themselves, put patent locks upon their street doors; and in whose suburbs every rus in urbe is mouldy with an overgrowth of salallows and poplars to secure itself from observation;—and I maintain therefore that the dignified self-seclusion of George IV. was the first of kingly virtues in a man who writes himself upon his penny pieces “D. G. BRIT. REX.”

But the caprices of the English public are the most capricious in the world. When once it is pleased to get up a storm, it blows like a Typhoon from every quarter at once;—and bitter were its gusts and *disgusts* against its anointed sovereign. The public, and the press which is its organ, a barrel organ, wherewith it grinds reasonable people out of patience, chose to declaim against the luxurious indolence of a prince, who was nevertheless undergoing the hard labour of trying to appear young at three-score; and though it was evidently in deference to the whims of the populace who at twenty

had adored him as a beau, that forty years long he grieved himself with the vocation, they were strangely out of conceit with the firmness of his Majesty's principles.

But this was no affair of mine. It was not I who fixed the Court at Windsor. I was not accountable for the good taste which caused the mountain to come to Mahomet instead of letting Mahomet toil to the mountain : and if a considerable waste of ministerial post horses and privy counciliatory patent axles attested that the sign manual was oftener times affixed in the county of Berks than the county of Middlesex, so much the worse for the Cabinet,—so much the better for the Household.—

Since I had ceased to be a denizen of St. James's Street, familiar to its view and disregarded as the old fashioned face of the palace clock, I had begun to think better of myself. Now and then, I glanced meteor-wise across the surface of London society ; and as the brilliancy of a shooting star attracts fifty

million of times more attention than your matter of fact planet, whose phenomena are duly set down in the ephemeris, I gained much by the rapidity of my transit.

When I *did* appear, it was to some purpose ; and I must confess that Mrs. Brettingham had been often in company with Cecil the Coxcomb without dreaming of soliciting the introduction that marked her deference towards the inscription of his name in the ennobling pages of the Red Book.

So conscious was I of this, that I had half a mind to refuse. Kindness, however, is often only refined cruelty ; and I resolved to punish her by compliance. Like Tarpeia, she did not know what she had asked for, till she felt the fatal influence of the golden buckler cast at her head.

I approached my victim, however, with a smiling countenance. As the claw of the cat is concealed under the softest fur, I recommend all heroes of romance intent upon lording it over

ladies, to remember that Sultanias are strangled with a silken bowstring. I accosted Mrs. Brettingham as Richard the Third the Princess Anne,—all Chesterfield concentrated in my bow,—all Hybla distilling from my lips. She had taken me for a man of straw,—she found me a man of eider-down. My countenance was sunshiny as a Midsummer day,—or a Cuyp,—or a solar lamp.

Sans armes, comme l'innocence, sans ailes comme la
constance,

I submitted to be tied to her side like a King Charles's spaniel to the girdle of a court beauty, or a bunch of keys to that of a parsonic housewife.

The consequence was that, vain of her ascendancy, Mariana was thoroughly off her guard. Secure from offence, *defence* was superfluous. A shield was useless against "*l'innocence sans armes*;" a cage unnecessary for "*la constance sans ailes*."—There are more ways in heaven and earth of establishing an absolute monarchy

than are dreamt of by any one but Cecil Danby or Louis Philippe.

I should have given myself less trouble had I been quite certain of the nature and intentions of pretty Mrs. Brettingham. It is easy to describe a woman in an off-hand way, as marked for conquest, like a tree for the axe by a white cross on the bark. But the policy of female nature envelopes itself in ever-fluctuating robes of gauze, which render it impossible to define the exact outline, or

Catch 'ere she glance the Cynthia of the minute.

The retrospective eye, unpuzzled by such nebulous delusions, sees accurately, and determines safely whether the angel have cloven feet, or the demon silver wings. But so long as the spell be upon one, perpetual misgivings, perpetual recantation of our mistrusts, serve alternately to fan the flickering flame of inclination. Every school-boy, pre-admonished that the Syrens were scaly monsters with soft

faces and sweet voices, is enabled to jest upon the folly of their victims. But the danger of the temptation consisted in the glassy waters, which, concealing their deformities, allowed them to be perceived only as the fairest of the fair.

Sometimes when, recalling to mind hints I had heard hazarded concerning Mrs. Brettingham, I prepared myself to accost her with the easy superiority which a man under such circumstances is sometimes ungenerous enough to assume, I used to be startled and shamed by the child-like simplicity of her countenance. To attribute guile to those clear blue eyes, to connect the idea of duplicity with those mantling blushes, seemed profanation. I felt guilty as if fighting with concealed armour or concealed weapons ; and shrunk back, as Pan may have done, when he first beheld his unsightly features reflected in some pure and glassy stream.—At such moments, there was no sacrifice Mariana might not have demanded of me in atonement of my vile mistrust!—

Still, my doubts recurred. She was young, beautiful, accomplished, sprung from a family attached to the decencies of life,—a wife, a mother, rich, healthy, happy. What could induce her to hazard the esteem of society by adventuring a decided flirtation with a man of my notorious laxity of principle?

My sagacious public,—you have guessed it!—"Cæsar was ambitious." Mr. Brettingham was a simple gentleman with his half-dozen thousands a year,—a position conferring all the happiness this world can compass if enjoyed with greatness, that is, contentedness of mind. But Mariana's mind was not contented. She was covetous of the pomps and vanities of life. She loved place and precedence, and could not bear to be confounded in the mob of Thompsons and Johnsons. She wanted to be specific. She knew all the distinctions between the definite and indefinite article prefixed to a name. She was eager to be something—that is, to be somebody; and

since, according to the proverb, “il vaut mieux avoir affaire à Dieu qu’à ses Saints,” conceived it pleasanter to be helped up the steps of the Temple of Fashion by the King, than by those jealous priestesses, the Exclusives, who, however indulgent now, were then as exacting concerning the sixteen quarterings of an aspirant, as a Herald of the Empire examining the claims of a pretendant to some German Chapter or the Golden Fleece.

To reach those recondite shades of Windsor was, however, a difficult matter. I was considered a favourite,—nay, I *was* a favourite; and Mariana rightly conjectured that the Mrs. Brettingham smiled upon by Cecil Danby had only to engage a house on the Steyne the following winter, to be invited to the Pavilion.

So paltry are the objects of coterie ambition!—Alas! the typical apple of the Judaical Paradise was no unseemly emblem of all subsequent motives of female temptation!—

CHAPTER II.

Meanwhile opinion gilds with varying rays,
Those painted clouds that beautify our days ;
Each want of happiness by Hope supplied,
And each vacuity of sense, by Pride ;
Then build as fast as knowledge can destroy ;
In Folly's cup still laughs the bubble, Joy.

POPE.

Nugis addere pondus.—HOR. EP. 19.

I HAVE perhaps observed before (but truisms cannot be too often repeated, or what would become of parliamentary eloquence?)—that we prize the objects of our affections rather according to the value set upon them by others, than according to our own. In love, as in all else, we must spell by the book ; and our passions, like our milestones, are measured from the standard on Cornhill.

Mrs. Brettingham was considered just then,

the prettiest woman about town. When her carriage glanced through the park, people stood still to gaze. Her face was limned by Lawrence, and stared at in the Exhibition ; and I appeal to Boyle Farm, whether it had any thing half so pretty at its breakfast ?—It was perhaps because conscious the metal was sterling, that she was so eager to have it stamped with the King's countenance.

That she *was* desirous of royal notice, I knew : for by attaining it, she was secure of double the portion of my society. Such at least was the light in which she represented the matter to *me*, or in which I represented it to myself,—and for my own share, felt of course that it would be far from unsatisfactory to have my brilliancy thrown out into relief, in those Pavilion soirées, by such a shadow as the beautiful Mrs. Brettingham constantly attached to my precious person.

But it is no such easy matter to effect innovations in a royal circle. A new star among

the Pleiades, or a new fleuron in the crown, were less difficult to account for, than a new face; nor are the beefeaters keeping guard over the crown jewels more vigilant than the doorkeepers of royal favour!—

Still, I determined to do my best, in hopes of Mariana's worst; and flattering her vanity and my own, went on accepting Brettingham's invitations to dinner and his wife's smiles, whenever I derogated by a sojourn in town.

Those were mighty pleasant days!—as one usually says of days that are certain never to recur. Throughout Europe, it was holiday time for people intent upon promoting the greatest happiness of the smallest number. While the fashionable world of London, unchecked by the influence of a female court, did as it listed, in Paris, the person of the new King, Charles X., was so surrounded by Jesuits, both in and out of the Order, that he was unable to perceive what was going on at Court; and the Pavillon de Marsan, secure from his paternal

surveillance, was playing its fantastic tricks before high Heaven in a style which if it made the angels weep, made mortals smile.

Nothing could exceed the brilliancy of the fêtes offered to the young Duchesse de Berri,—that is, not to the young Duchesse de Berri, but to the mother of the heir presumptive of the throne of France. Like the sunshine glaring on the beautiful vineyards of Portici, where the blue sky smiles above and the purple sea gleams beyond, while volcanic fires glow and redden in unsuspected fury below,—all was fair at the Tuileries,—all fair at the Palais Royal. In England, a standing army—in France, a brigade of priests,—the rouge et noir janissaries of modern despots,—enabled that venerable dowager Toryism to smooth the locks and pamper the pride of her spoiled child, Conservatism ;—and Intolerance to adapt the keys of St. Peter to the locks of a new Bastille.

Nevertheless, Vesuvius was preparing for

an outburst. I know very little about the *coté droit* or the *coté gauche* of Paris politics ; inasmuch as it occurs to the place-mongers to announce every now and then, as the *Médecin Malgrè lui* did of the human organization, that they have *changé tout cela*. But this I remember, that Villèle was the most unpopular minister against whom the cry of impeachment had been raised since the Restoration.

As to English politics, they were pretty much in the state of vicissitude that the human viscera may have been, when changing sides at the instigation of the said *Médecin*. Canning was recently deceased ;—a great man who accomplished little,—a Damascus blade that came to hand when a tomahawk was wanted,—a temple of polished marble, when the wants of the times demanded a structure of unhewn granite. But now that he *was* gone, neither granite nor marble remained. Then came a coalition ministry,—the wretchedest thing in nature ; like a spliced mast, sure to give way in a storm. Each

moiety of the party was waiting for a favourable opportunity to throw over the others;—and Huskisson, the *Ministre malgré lui*, was the victim.

In Ireland, too, I must admit that the sunshine was overclouded. St. Patrick seemed no longer satisfied to lie still on his gridiron, like the blessed martyr, St. Lawrence ; and was beginning to make an outcry. But after all, the outcries of Ireland have never availed her more than the sputtering of an apple while being roasted !—

Some there were who saw clearly that though no ostensible change had been accomplished, the first stone of a temple of Liberalism had been laid by Canning, which must eventually find a superstructure.

Whenever I was able to escape from the golden fetters of my royal servitude, or the silken meshes of my *più dolce servitù*, so as to snatch a dinner with my brother in Connaught Place, I clearly discerned, though more from his silence than his words, that Danby contem-

plated the growing irritability of Europe as that of a long overgorged boa constrictor, beginning to rouse itself for action ; and that the long calm we had enjoyed was only the deadly stillness preceding a storm.

The sobriety of mind with which my brother refrained from taking any part in an administration, whose measures, feeble as they were, he had not sufficient ascendancy to fortify, was characteristic of his usual forecast. Again and again, did he refuse high office ; for it was useless to lend the influence of his name, where the influence of his mind was ineffectual.

Herries was sometimes of our party : confident and jactant with all the official self-sufficiency that seems to await, like a wedding garment, the privileged banqueters upon Downing Street loaves and fishes. His reserve of former days was giving way under the influence of a long series of ministerial turtle and venison ; and the marrow and fatness of prosperity had opened the heart of the shy man, and the

lips of the dumb. He was now a great speaker in the House, and a great talker out of it : but, alas ! he *would* persist in speechifying where he was only wanted to talk ! I know not *what* he did when wanted to speak, except draw down the cheers of the ministerial benches, as the newspapers daily reported ;—but in company he was a bore.

Having once assumed the ministerial plural, he talked Gargantuaciously, like a man talking for his party. “ WE think,”—“ WE intend”—“ OUR policy in the East”—“ OUR South American negotiations”—sounded in the mouth of Herries as multivocal as the “ Marchons—Combattons !” of the chorus at the French opera, or the “ Qual orror !” of Otello.

I never liked him when he was singular,—I hated him in the plural ; and had hardly patience to hear him dogmatizing at my brother’s table,—giving out his platitudes as if decisive as Papal Bulls, because the “ we” by which they were fulminated had the authority of the

Gazette ; while Danby sat by, a patient auditor, with those wise meanings reflected in his quiet eye, which his dictatorial brother-in-law allowed no opportunity to issue from his lips.

For Danby was one, in all the events of life, too wise to contend against the force of circumstances. The secret of true greatness consists in the power of so calculating the concomitants of our position, as to attempt nothing where defeat is probable.—Where is the use of arguing against a man who silences your logic with the thunders of Government authority?—as well attempt to answer the fire of a battery of four and twenty pounders, with a discharge of Oriental pearls !

My brother seldom rose now in Parliament ; and the Tory party regarded him as, if not a traitor, an unavailable adherent. On all major points, he voted with the party ; and now and then, on the agitation of a question regarding the maintenance of the constitution, upheld the venerable banner with all the vigour of his

powerful arm, by one of those mild and expository speeches which are the eloquence of the wise.—It was “*la raison avec son filet de voix*”—but the golden thread is of firmer texture than the hempen cable.

Notwithstanding my esteem for Danby, however, there was so little in common between us, that I resorted to his society almost as rarely as to the dreary old house in Hanover Square. He was what is called “lost to the world,” that is, too much absorbed by the world to come. His daughter was growing up. Jane had now attained the age when the dawn of human character casts its golden light before; and Danby saw, or fancied he saw, in the soil turned up by the plough and harrow of the governess, a field worthy of higher cultivation. Such was thenceforward the object of his life. I often noticed to him that Jane was strikingly pretty: but if her father saw in her the making of an angel, it was not an angel of the species which St. James’s Street calls angelic.

All philosophers, they say, have an Utopia, in which they invest the romance (which *they* call wisdom) of their minds. Danby's Utopia was concentrated in the nature of his child. In her, he hoped to exemplify his idea of excellence and good government; and of a surety, the feminine virtues of her mother, the manly sense of her father, if combined in due proportions, were likely to produce a woman such as these our times have rarely worshipped.

My angels, meanwhile, were of a very different calibre; and it was like emerging out of the solemn aisles of Westminster Abbey on a sunshiny afternoon into the stir and bustle of Palace Yard, whenever I quitted the argumentative dinner table in Connaught Place for those gaudy scenes, the excitement of which was becoming essential to my existence.

Happiness is a good thing after forty;—till then, Pleasure is a pleasanter. At twenty, thirty was my date for growing soberly happy; but when thirty arrived, I knew better.

At thirty-five, about the date of which I am writing, I was less certain. In spite of Delcroix, or rather perhaps thanks to Delcroix, there were certain puckerings near the eyes, certain silvery threads perceptible among the curls of Cecil Danby, which would have betrayed themselves to any other eyes than those of Mariana, and which rendered me somewhat suspicious that the time was at hand when I should cease to charm; and, consequently, when a perpetual tinkling of cymbals might cease to charm *me*.

There was no use in forestalling the epoch. After all, philosophy may do its best to refine our minds, or utilitarianism to vulgarize them, but there is nothing more joyous, so long as the pulse beats high and the nerves remain firmly strung, than the existence whose sunshine is candlelight,—whose nightingales are opera singers,—whose nectar, Sillery,—whose ambrosia, bastions de volaille! All the poetry of civilized life condenses itself into such a

destiny as I was then enjoying. The women with whom I whispered were always arrayed in their utmost prodigality of charms; the men on whom I looked, were ever smiling; the flowers were in perpetual bloom; the dinners hot,—the wines cold,—the slaveys full of alacrity: the wheels of such a household as that of George the Fourth being greased with *huile à la rose*.

Moreover in spite of crows' feet, in the set in which I lived, I was still "handsome Cecil,"—the pet, at five and thirty, of the old boys of sixty among whom I sauntered away my days. If a few grey hairs were perceptible, what would *they* have given to exchange their wigs for such a crop! If my waist were no longer trimly as in my early days of womanslaughter, what would *they* have given for the manly chest, enabling Meyer to dispense with twenty sheets of wadding in every coat! Yes!—I was still an Apollo in that superannuated Olympus!

I suppose I was a bad courtier, for I made

no effort to conceal it. Sir John Harris, with a head of hair that might have served as an advertisement for the Macassar oil, was prudent enough to set up a Truefitt as stiff in buckle as the mane of the lion over Northumberland House; and I even suspected him of getting up crows' feet with a camel's hair brush, like Farren when, in his boyhood, he made so inimitable a representative of Sir Peter Teazle.

Sweet Sir John was now the very reflected image of the King!—But without intending any reflection, that which is good for Peter is not good for Paul, when Peter is Peter the Great; and whenever John Harris bored one about shades of sherry,—made his nose red with curaçoa,—or exclaimed with Lear, “Pray you undo this button,” after a surfeit of green peas at Christmas,—others besides myself wished he had chosen another original for his mimicry. We often voted ourselves Harrised to death!

Even the King, I suspect, was disgusted with

this worse half of his “double cherry seeming parted;”—“*veluti in speculum*” not being a satisfactory proposition, when the glass reflects nothing but deformity.

What was wanted of a man in Harris’s position, was rather the power of giving a fillip to the monotony of royal seclusion. When the languor of declining years begins to oppress a prince, or the torpor of exhaustion a man who has lived too fast, unless capable of deriving amusement from books, or solace from THE book, he must *à toute force* be entertained. It does not suffice for *him* as for Cowper, “from the loopholes of retreat to gaze upon the stir” of the world. He requires an expert acoustician to bring its echoes nearer to his ear. The royal lion must have a decent jackall to fetch and carry news. It is strange how often we divert ourselves with talking about people whom we should consider it derogation to talk *to*,—and if Harris had understood how to make himself agreeable, he would have brought us every day

some little chickenbone to pick of London tittle-tattle, instead of strutting about like a jay in borrowed plumes, or a Dublin Aide de Camp.

For there really was a good deal to talk about in London, just then, for those great enough to delight in small talk. There were two or three young fellows of fortune come of age, who were pelting people with their guineas; and two or three of the prettiest creatures brightening the ball rooms, that ever played the Houri to Christian Turks. It was the very meridian hour of fashion,—and gorgeous enough for a *coup de soleil*.

Nothing like emulation to quicken the human pulse!—How does the schoolboy's copy illustrate its capital *E's*?

“EMULATION ANIMATES MANKIND,”

ay, and womankind too! Half the brilliancy of that now disbanded regiment of the gay world called the Exclusives, was owing to the deter-

mination of proving to a consortless King, that, in the absence of a female Court, a tribunal might erect itself as illegal perhaps as that which tried and executed King Charles, but nearly as potent.

People are beginning to forget the Exclusives; I believe because they were written out of fashion by a remarkably bad novel. But they were a curious tribe; and London society has never been half so condensed, and consequently half so brilliant, since their fortifications were thrown down, their brazen gates demolished, their fosses filled up. Their authority, by the way, arose out of the very un-English policy of centralization. For once, a handful of women acted in unison; and a new Thermopylæ accredited their prowess.

Nothing like the energy of an opposition for making one aware of the strength of an administration. It was by the rancour of the Excluded that I understood the power of these Exclusives: for Mariana was of the opposition!—

I scarcely know in what consisted the deficiencies that rendered her obnoxious to their coterie. All I perceived on the subject was that, into the inner sanctuary of the Temple of Fashion, Mrs. Brettingham had not made her way.

I seldom made mine; from no want of the countersign enabling me to enter,—for their high priestess, Lady Grindlesham, was a lady patroness of Cecil Danby as well as of Almack's;—but because I thought those women a bore. I do not pretend to despise fine ladies; but a fine lady, according to *my* exposition of the thing, must be a lady so very refined, that her finery is imperceptible; one of those rare combinations of high birth, high breeding and intelligence, who move through life as a well-built cutter through the water, without leaving a ripple on the waves;—an object of service and delight to her owners, and of admiration to all the world.

But I hate *laborious* fine ladyism, as heavy and graceless a thing as a gilded Lord Mayor's

coach ; and the pride, fastidiousness, and prodigality of fuss and money of the Exclusives served only to shew how many thousand weight of spangles and feathers are necessary to weigh in the balance against queenly influence in the land.—

O curas hominum, ô quantum est in rebus inane!

Oh ! womankind equally absurd ! to trouble yourselves so sorely with minikin Machiavelism and gilt paper stateswomanship !—how little did your manœuvres effect beyond making yourselves objects of pity to the wise, and odium to the vulgar !

The pride of the Exclusives piqued the multitude to discover a thousand blemishes in their escutcheon, seeing there were many of them who could not have proved even four quarters of nobility ; while their prodigality set the gossips upon ascertaining the amount of mortgages upon the lands of their lords, who were not their masters. Their fastidiousness affixed

publicity to a thousand traits of personal frailty or personal defect, which had been otherwise passed over in silence ;—and from all this, they incurred a degree of opprobrium in the coteries, fully equalling the unpopularity of the court with that mightier circle, the public, of which royalty is the centre. Poor Lady Ormington, when occasionally I devoted a vacant evening to her tea-table, was full of wonder at the potency of their sceptre. Even the Saints stood wondering!

“ Ah! my dear Mr. Danby,” sighed Lady Harriet Vandeleur, whom I met one day at Rivingtons’ door, (as I was coming out of the adjoining silk-mercier’s, where I had been giving a design for a new waistcoat piece for his Majesty),—“ what a lamentable thing to see poor dear Lady Grindlesham so wedded to the levities of life, as to be playing the girl in a hair head and gauze tunic, with her son gaining prizes at Cambridge!—If her eldest had been a daughter, you know, she might have been a

grandmother these three years!—Yet you see she fancies herself sixteen!—Poor deluded soul! if her eyes could but be opened by—”

Hastily interrupting her,—for I saw that her Ladyship was setting in for a cant, and an easterly wind was cutting us in quarters much as I suspect she was about to do Lady Grindlesham,—I assured her I made it a duty to remain blind to the faults of a pretty woman, more especially when, as in Lady Grindlesham’s case, a particular friend.

“A particular friend?”—reiterated Lady Harriet, and instantly drawing me back into the vestibule of the shop she was quitting, (what a locale for scandal-mongery!) “in that case,” said she, “you would infinitely oblige me by speaking to her in favour of my cousin Lady Jane O’Callaghan, who has two daughters she wants exceedingly to get to Almack’s this season. The first subscription, my dear Mr. Danby, will not begin for this month to come; so we have plenty of time before us. To say the truth, I wrote

three times to Lady Grindlesham, without getting an answer. At last, I sent her a list of Lady Jane's family connections, to prove that I had not troubled her for a person not fully qualified to grace her list. And what do you think she had the insolence to do?—I had 'dear Lady Grindleshamed' *her*,—having intimately known her father,—I was going to say her grandfather, but I believe she never had one;—and in return, she presented me her compliments, and begged me to address my communications to her at Willis's rooms, where they would be attended to at the proper time.—Did you ever hear of such a thing!"—

"Not often of any thing so reasonable from so fine a lady!"—was my cool reply.

"But I tell you, my dear Mr. Danby, Lady Jane O'Callaghan is daughter to the Earl of O'Shaughnessy,—whose Barony is of Henry the Seventh's time; and her husband is the eldest son of the Catholic Lord O'Flaherty,—whose ancestors were Kings of ———"

“ Spare me, dear Lady Harriet!” cried I, struggling to get away from this O-verwhelming pedigree, “ you have said enough to convince me that your protégées have every chance of exclusion. You must be aware that the Patronesses have a decided objection to —, but I will not say what might offend you in the persons of your cousins. Let me recommend you to drop the connection in your correspondence with Lady Grindlesham, or I will not answer for her not dropping you. If she and her sisterhood were not to do saucy things, such people as the descendants of Henry the Seventh’s Barons would not care to go to Almack’s. Meanwhile, I recommend their enlightenment to your prayers.—But your ladyship’s carriage is driving off—will you give me leave?”

And *in* I handed her,—looking penknives with sixteen blades at me; while I who, fifteen years before, used to thrill to the heart’s core at the touch of her hand, shrugged my shoulders

as she drove away. And yet, the worldliness I thought despicable in her at fifty, was only the same worldliness I had thought charming at thirty-five; saving that the hypocrisy which then made her a prude, now rendered her a bigot. There was, however, a small balance of rouge and pearl powder to be deducted from the latter account, which had been one of the weightiest sins of the former.

Such were the Exclusives; and such the ninnies upon whose follies their empire was founded. It is now a thing of tradition!—Exclusivism, fashionable novelism, Nashism, and fifty other fribbleisms of the West-end, were utterly extinguished by the Reform Bill; like certain fungi which, when trodden under foot, explode into dust, “leaving not a wreck behind.”

The Exclusives were, perhaps, obliged to invent their vocation in order to afford an object to their otherwise aimless existence; for if Idleness be the mother of the vices,—

Ennui is the parent of half the follies of mankind. What things we used to do at Windsor to get rid of that *dolce far niente*, which may be *dolce* enough as the leisure of contented minds, but which is bitter as colocynth, or the pleasantries of * * * * * when borne as an official burthen.—“ Oh ! the curse of having to amuse an unamusable prince ! ” wrote a female Cis Danby of the last century,—who had probably been spending the morning in choosing flies, and drawing patterns of purple velvet and white satin fishing-books with enamelled clasps, to contain them,—or dressing mother of pearl rods and golden hooks, to capture the gudgeon of the Virginia water of Versailles.

I could a tale unfold, as amusing as instructive. But the man who hath taken wages for his service, hath taken them also for his discretion. Were I to find that O'Brien amused his brother tidewaiters (for I have done an Honourable master's duty by him, and provided for

him in the Customs), with a sketch of my Life and Times in Hanover Square, I would—no! not have him kicked,—I would say he acted like a footman;—and should feel deserving the same ignominious stricture if I did not hasten to close the chapter.

Vivendum recte est cùm propter plurima tunc his
Præcipue causis, ut linguas mancipiorum
Contemnas!

CHAPTER III.

Fair Britain, in a monarch blest,
Whose virtues bear the strictest test ;—
Whom never faction could bespatter,
Nor minister nor poet flatter :
What justice in rewarding merit !
What magnanimity of spirit !
What lineaments divine we trace
Through all his figure, mien and face :
Tho' peace with olive bind his hands,
Confest the conquering hero stands.
Hydaspes, Indus, and the Ganges,
Dread from his hand impending changes ;
And Yankee, Tartar, and Chinese,
Short by the knees intreat for peace.—SWIFT.

THE Dean has forestalled all that my loyalty would otherwise have dictated ; but under cover of our united flourish of trumpets, I suppose I may presume to whisper to the public that I found the thralldom of my golden chains almost as irksome as if they had been formed of baser metal.

“*Chassez le naturel, il revient au galop*,” says the poet, or the proverb created by the poet; and the artificiality of my compelled existence caused me after a time to yearn for the simplicities of life, as a fish gasping on the sand after the limpid waters.

It is a horrible thing to resign the privilege of being out of health,—out of spirits,—out of temper. Even the sun, to palliate the monotony of its existence, is sometimes permitted to shine through a cloud. But a courtier,—“*homme sans humeur et sans honneur*,”—must be an incarnate smile,—an instinctive affirmative,—a symbol of obsequious acquiescence; his “nay” must be so modulated as to sound like “yea”; his dissent must be so accoutred as to resemble accordance, like its twin brother. He is invited frankly to declare his opinions, because he is pre-understood to have no opinions but those of his august master; and his independence of speech is much like that of Punch’s dog, trained to bark at its wooden,

master, in order that it may be rapped reprov-
ingly on the pate for the recreation of the by-
standers.

Even the satisfaction of eating, drinking, and
sleeping more luxuriously than elsewhere, is
marred by the drawback of being unable to
eat, drink, and sleep in one's own time and
place; and the seclusion which was sport to
his Majesty, was death to me. *I* had not been
threescore and five years on the boards, to
render me disgusted with

The fickle breath of popular applause.

Pall Mall had never hissed *me*. No Chancellor
had betrayed me into odious measures by the
promise of a divorce, and left me in the lurch
to be twitted by my wife, and pelted by the
rabble. I was consequently enough in sorts
with mankind to sigh after the acclamations of
society. I could have endured the weight of
my golden chains, if permitted to rattle them
for the admiration of the vulgar; but to have

to play Lord Grizzle without an audience, made me painfully aware that I was playing Lord Grizzle. The surliness of my soul under the comic mask I was condemned to wear, made me fully understand the hypochondriacism of Carlini—the Grimaldi of Paris—who wept under his harlequin's dress while the public laughed at his lazzi.

The shepherds who were good enough to remain contented in the "*bella età di oro*," and the vale of Tempe, had never read a newspaper, or applauded Malibran; and I swear there were moments when I should have preferred an attic in Bury Street, as the most abject of younger brothers, to that gorgeous Castle,—to that Apician menu,—to—

But, no!—I cannot permit myself to say a word against the park.—Though, during the early days of my service in the Household, it had been pain and grief to me to traverse that portion of the royal domain adjoining Forest Lodge, I had become inured to it as one does

to any moral torture ; for it is only such pangs as a tooth-ache or the *tic-doulooureux* which habit does nothing to assuage. And now, my favourite refuge from my weariness of spirit, was to ride off alone into those verdant glades, philosophizing, like Jacques, among the drooping trees ; and I verily believe occasionally mistaken by the officers of His Majesty's Household Brigade, through the mists of an autumnal day, for the spirit of Herne the hunter.

One pleasant afternoon in October,—(it was October I remember, because Lord —— and Sir —— my colleagues in waiting, were gone pheasant shooting in the preserves towards Englefield Green,) I was sauntering on horseback in one of the grassy by-ways of the park, noting the golden tinge upon the beech trees as contrasted with the thick dark unchangeable foliage of an adjoining thicket of hollies, moralizing, (for an autumnal day is apt to bring on severe attacks of morality,) upon the——but why trouble the public with my

moralizations, when I am on the brink of an interesting episode ;—when, lo ! I beheld at no great distance a pony chaise dragged furiously along, with two ladies for its occupants, by a pony which for its size might have been carried off in their arms, but which by its spirit, which was an evil spirit, seemed to be carrying *them* the Lord knows whither.

The weather was not too hot to make exertion disagreeable ; and I consequently rode up,—seized the little beast by the bit,—and effectually stopped its career ; but in the operation, no matter whether by my bungling or the pony's, the chaise was dragged over the stump of a tree, and overturned.

I had nothing to apprehend of loss of life or risk of limb to the heroines of the adventure ; and even had their peril been greater, there was nothing in their dress or equipage (all I knew of them at present) to engage any *very* earnest sympathies in their behalf. I had consequently some difficulty in refraining from a

smile at the absurd figure they cut when emerging from the thorny thicket into which they had been precipitated ; — their faces scratched and bleeding,—their green veils torn into shreds ; while the pony stood trembling and panting, effectually tamed by the incumbance of the overturned chaise at its heels.

To conceal the inopportune hilarity of my countenance, I was glad to turn away and fasten my horse to a neighbouring holly tree, ere I proceeded to offer my services towards the re-instatement of ladies, chaise, and pony, in their proper juxta-position.

This was easy enough ; for the chaise was as light as it becomes a pony chaise to be. But, during the process, I discovered that there were tears as well as blood upon the cheeks of my new acquaintances. I could stand the scratches, —I could not stand the tears. I now began to be sorry for them in right earnest. Besides, a fit of hysterics would have been tremendous in the thick of the forest, without so much as a

green ditch at hand ; and I had no mind to convert my André into a Goffredo's helmet, for the benefit of a Clorinda,—name unknown.

However, they thought better of it, and did not faint ; but simply expressed to each other their determination not to entrust themselves again to the recreant pony to return home. I say “SIMPLY expressed” advisedly ; for they spoke with such lady-like simplicity, that I felt I had done wrong in undervaluing them ; and, accordingly, put a great deal of Cecil Danby into my offers of further service.

On my entreating them to let me fetch a person from the nearest gate, who would undertake to convey home their carriage and take charge of my horse, while I became their escort, they complied with the good sense which makes submission to a necessity appear an act of grace.

It was not till I returned from the lodge with one of the under-keepers, who, knowing me to be one of the household, was as obsequious as a page in waiting, that I made enquiry of my fair

friends touching the “home” to which chaise, pony, and selves were to be transported ;—when it appeared that they resided at Sunning Hill ; and that, even to persons acquainted with the cross-cuts of the forest, we had a three-miles march before us !—

I have said that the weather was not so sultry as to make exertion objectionable, yet I confess my prospects staggered me. Moreover, it was so late in the afternoon, that gallop back as I might, my credit for punctuality, the politeness of Kings, but the duty of Kings’ guests, was in considerable danger. I was at all times a reluctant pedestrian. I hated walking, and my boots hated walking. However, I was in for it. There was no choice. Besides, a walk in the forest with two anonymous ladies, had at least the charm of novelty ; and

est natura hominum novitatis avida.

Off we set, therefore ; pausing a few minutes at the lodge to purify the faces of my compa-

nions, and refresh their spirits by a little cold water externally and internally distributed ; and a right curious predicament we stood in,—for by the obsequiousness of the lodge-keepers, they saw clearly that their unknown champion was somebody,—perhaps a nobleman—perhaps a prince ; while I had reason to opine that they were nobody,—for the name of Silwood Cottage seemed altogether new and strange to the keeper of our King's deer, who might be supposed to know something of the notabilities of the neighbourhood. But, at all events, they were charming nobodies. Their faces, after ablution, proved to be just the sort of faces that tempt one to look and look again, from the certainty of never finding them in statu quo ;—endless variation of bloom—unceasing changes of expression. Both were dark-haired,—both brunettes ; but the eyes of one were sleepy brown, the other variable grey :—they were “alike—but oh ! how different.”

For the first half mile, I was desperately in

love with the sparkler ; for the next mile and a half, with the more languid beauty. For half a mile to come, I could hardly say with which ; and for all that remained of our walk, very decidedly with both.

By this time, too, I had discovered that my soft beauty was called Annie, and my bright one Soph,—to abbreviate Sophia, as I then supposed ; though it afterwards turned out to be Sophronia.

But what else?—Miss, or Madam, or my Lady?—Were they married or single?—maids, wives, or widows?—How was I to guess?—I could not ask them ; and all my hints and guesses on the subject proved to little purpose.

It was, as I have said, October,—the very season for a walk to such as delight in such efforts. The skies were bright, yet the sunshine was tempered by such freshness in the air, as rendered it exciting rather than oppressive. The grass was elastic,—the foliage varied as if touched up by Turner in one of his parox-

ysms of tinto-mania. The hips and haws were red on the bushes, the mountain-ash berries on the tree; and the robin was beginning to pipe in the hedges his autumnal grace before meat.

My companions noticed these things, like persons accustomed to take pleasure in country sounds and sights; made no complaints of fatigue; well-bred enough to know that any murmur against their present plight might be interpreted into distaste of their companion.—I saw, at once, that *they* were not Exclusives!

They made no allusion to Windsor; and might have been living at Kamschatka for any thing they seemed to know or care about the court. At first, this delighted me; for I had the silly vanity of fancying myself a sort of Il Bondocani or Knight of Snowdon among them; and determined to burst upon them in the sequel, or at some future time, arrayed in all the splendours of a Mandarin of the royal button.

But at last, I grew almost impatient of their

carelessness of courtly things : and for the life and soul and philosophy of me could not refrain from certain startling allusions to Windsor, intended to excite their curiosity.

I might as well have made them to the robins!—No result!—Not so much as the interchange of a glance between Soph. and Annie purporting to say—Who on earth have we got with us?—

For my own share, though on most occasions an expert guesser, I own I reached their garden paling without the most distant surmise as to the Mrs. or Miss—hood of my companions. A family likeness proclaimed them sisters, though I have seen cousins almost as resembling ; and they were decidedly Creoles, —for one of the charms of their animated conversation consisted in comparisons between the green thickets of the forest and a certain home of theirs among the feathery trees of the tropics ; and they talked of their Caribbean sea and its surf and coral reefs, with a poetry of

diction that brought my friend Tommy Moore and his Nea only too vividly to my mind. For, as I live by bread, it was not good to be thinking of Nea and Tommy Moore, and acting champeron in a green forest to two young beauties who talked so far above singing.

However, I managed to think of *them* rather than *him*, and a little perhaps of His Majesty ;—for though earnestly pressed to stay and partake of a dinner, the modest preparations of which were perceptible through the French windows of a pretty cottage opening through a rustic portico to the lawn, I refrained. I merely asked permission to make early inquiries after the health of my charming companions, mounted my horse, (which a pricker from the lodge had brought to the cottage gate full twenty minutes before our arrival,) and away back to Windsor,—back to gilt plate and Persian carpets,—iced hock and val de penas,—lobster lets and *blanc de faisan au céleri*,—the kotoo of courtiership and the listlessness of those human

vegetables, those lichens encrusting the stately fabric of a court, who, with the gleanings of all the last echoes of all the cities of Europe to feed their hungry ear, still crave for news,—news,—news ;—and would fain have new wars, fresh earthquakes, and a pestilence or two, invented for the relief of their ennui!—My beloved brethren of the Red Book,

Homunculi quanti sunt, cùm recogito !

CHAPTER IV.

Eventful day ! how hast thou changed my state !
Once, on the cold and winter shaded side
Of a bleak hill, mischance had rooted me !
Transplanted now to the gay sunny vale
Like the green thorn of May, my fortune flowers !

HOME.

Respicere exemplar vitæ morumque jubebo
Doctum imitatore, et verras hinc ducere voces.

HOR.

I HAD NOT surmised that any earthly thing could keep me awake so nearly all night,—except an indigestion after a macédoine containing too much melon,—as my incertitudes concerning Soph. and her sister :—not so much who they were or what they were, as what they thought of me !—

The occasion was excellent as a meritorimeter. They were unprejudiced judges,—enabled to

decide upon me only as an animal standing betwixt earth and sky,—with whom they had conversed freely for three quarters of an hour : and who had done his very *very* best to make those three quarters of an hour pass like *one* !—

I said not a word to any one of my adventure ; and my fever of impatience rose all the higher, as a case of suppressed curiosity thrown into the system. But I was resolved to ride over to Sunning Hill the following day, and ascertain all that was to be ascertained, good, bad, or indifferent, respecting my new friends. Any thing but the last !—I could bear to find them right or wrong ; but if they proved to be mediocre, commonplace people, I was prepared to turn Saladin's head back to Windsor for good and all, without further care for my heroines.—

Homme propose—roi dispose !—

The little Queen of Portugal came to visit us. Her Majesty was just then in abeyance in England ; which has always been made a sort of

warehouse for bonded sovereigns. My morrow was right royally monopolized, ay, and even the following day : and thus, I had two more sleepless nights,—the last, positively insupportable ;—for I was haunted by visions of niggers and plantations,—yams and centipedes,—all the mockeries with which the mystery of somnambulic association invests its visions. Sometimes Soph, sometimes Annie, was Nea ; sometimes I was Tommy Moore,—sometimes Clarkson or Wilberforce ; — and together we wandered among the mangroves, and plucked the bread-fruit ; which I conclude was the forbidden fruit,—for close beside it lay coiled a snake, awful as the great Land Serpent of Paradise, or the Anaconda of Monk Lewis !

But enough for the patience of the public if I favour it with my day dreams, leaving out of the question the night-mares of my unrest. On the third day, I was on the way to Sunning Hill at an early hour. My services were sure of not being under requisition at Windsor.

There was a Cabinet Council. The gravities of death-warrants and such like cares of state were going on :—no Cis Danby,—no mother-of-pearl fishing rods for the present !

Silwood Cottage was just the sort of house where one might venture to make one's appearance at an unseemly hour. Soph and her sister were evidently distinct from the Order with whom, as Hajji Baba informs us, it is an act of criminality to be ignorant whether round spoons or oblong are to be used for such and such purposes of the table. They were thoroughly unconventionized. The Creole blood flowed too vividly in their veins to admit of such icy subjection. — However, I had an anterior object to Silwood ! — At a certain little village-inn, in the neighbourhood, called the Rising Sun, dwelt an honest man whom I had found occasion to befriend while Danby was the tenant of Forest Lodge, and to whom I determined to apply for information, in order that I might read the riot act

to my wild imaginations, in case the heroines of the pony chaise were unworthy of leading me into danger.

“To be sure he knowed them ladies!” was his reply to my cross-examination. “There varnt better nor kinder ladies in the willage. Nobody but ’ud go through fire and vater for ’em.—Yes! they *vas* sisters, one on ’em married—one on ’em single: couldn’t say which was which. They *vas* Vestingines. Mr. Greysdale the ’usband was away and expected back; and they lived quiet and retired, and seed no company during his absence.”—

This was dreadfully satisfactory! I began to suspect that the anaconda near the bread-fruit tree must be a prototype of myself; and Saladin evidently thought so too,—for five minutes afterwards, I was ringing at the gate of the Cottage.

ALEXANDER, my fine fellow!—in spite of thy adnomen of GREAT, thou wast a man of little mind, who couldst despond after new worlds

to conquer; as if it were necessary for the planets to be whirled out of their spheres to accomplish such a mystery!—Why the world is full of new worlds!—In the way of difficulties to be overcome, every next street contains the embryo of a Conquest of Persia; while almost every park paling surrounds the germ of a romance, such as would put Pyramus and Thisbe, or Romeo and Juliet, out of countenance.—Be it observed, by the way, *en passant*, that the last century and the present have failed to add a single classical couple to the muster roll of Cupid. Among wrong people, I believe, St. Preux and Julie are sometimes quoted; and to my thinking, Scott's Master of Ravenswood and Lucy Ashton are worth all the Petrarchs and Lauras that ever were tied together in poetical true lover's knots. But I doubt whether even these will receive legitimate Paphian Canonization. If any worthy pairs, therefore, have pretensions to this species of immortality,

and purpose applying to the Dunmow of Cyprus,

Cuneti adsint, meritæque expectent præmiæ palmæ!

Such vagaries as these however, were not passing through my mind while waiting at the cottage gate that my card might be taken into Mrs. Greysdale.—I was merely guessing whether that matronly title belonged by right to Annie or Soph; for worlds depended to me upon the solution of the enigma.

Impossible to determine! Annie was alone when I entered: and offered me her hand so cordially, that I was too much flattered to notice whether she alluded to her sister's absence as to that of the lady of the house, or merely as regretting that "Soph" would lose the pleasure of my visit.—The next minute, I was too much charmed to find myself seated in a lounging chair not half a yard from her work-table, to trouble myself further about the matter.

It is only boys who adore the belle of the ball room: those who have attained years of

discretion abhor the meretricious delusions of white satin and blonde lace.

To the eyes of all men worthy the name, a woman never looks more charming than in the disarray of a morning visit ; her dress simple—her cheeks unheated,—her manner easy.—She is then, *herself*.—No false excitement, no vain coquetry. How much more indicative of the wife, the gentle companion, the fireside friend, than when fluttering through the mazes of a waltz with roving eye and moistened skin, a mark for the audacity of the unprincipled, and the pity of the wise.

This really *was* passing through my mind, as I watched the taper fingers of Annie manœuvring her needle now under, now over, the white canvas of her delicate little tapestry frame ; ever and anon stopping short in her work, and throwing back her curls which had fallen forward while stooping over her work, as she looked smilingly in my face, to answer some question, or propose another.

She placed me at my ease at once, by showing me that I was no obstacle to her occupations; yet not too much at my ease, by giving me reason to suppose my presence an absorbing interest,—dividing her attention pretty equitably betwixt me and her lambswools.

I never saw a sweeter countenance,—a face of so fine an oval,—or curls more soft and glossy. People incurious in human physiognomy, think it a fine thing to assert that nature has but a single mould for peer and peasant—the duchess and her waiting-woman. Right, perhaps, as far as Nature is concerned! But Art, her hand-maiden, is a mighty disfigurer of her performances; and let any one whose time is passed exclusively in royal circles, where every feature is trained and every expression calculated, turn for a second to some kind fair guileless visage, whose conciliations are instinctive, and which exercises without shame its smiles and tears, because they are nature's indications of sensibility, as much as our eyes

are given us to see or our ears to hear,—and he will instantly admit the wondrous difference between the lady of nature's ennobling, and the lady of the king's.

I don't know why, but I had always entertained a horror of Creoles. There was an unavowed association in my mind between them and niggers and brown sugar,—calibashes and cowries,—with a little touch of the yellow fever. I fancied them inert, sawney (is *sawney* a corruption of *sournois*?) and though peppery as their own pimento, sickening as their guava. I could not bring myself to fancy them real right earnest ladies. They seemed destined to be put in spirits, like other Caribbean insects, or stuffed for a museum.

I knew better now. I knew *much* better soon. For as Soph. did not make her appearance during my visit, I asked permission to renew it; and Annie looked so pleased at the proposal, that I was bound to consider her Mrs. Greysdale, and to conclude that,

with an unmarried sister, she was still ignorant of my being a younger brother.

Blockhead that I was!—fine gentleman, rather, that I was!—These people knew no more of peerage jargon or exclusive impertinence, than I of those islands of the West which I now recognised as the fatherland of all that is sweetest in the world,—let alone sugar canes. They were genuinely glad to see me;—first, as a well-bred stranger who had promptly assisted them in an emergency; afterwards, as an agreeable acquaintance, who took pleasure in their society.

Mrs. Greysdale, as if aware of the pranks my imagination was playing at their expense, not only frankly declared herself, at my second visit, in the person of Annie; but presented her sister to me as Miss Vavasour, with all the terseness of one of Dante's free-spoken heroines in the *World of Shadows*.

Ricordati di me che son la Pia.

Sienna mi fè—disfecemi Maremma:

that is, she told me that, born in Jamaica, they had been educated in England ; and that falling into ill health shortly after her marriage with her Creole cousin, Richard Greysdale, she had been despatched to England, with her sister, for change of air ; had settled herself at Sunning Hill, for the benefit of a purer atmosphere than London, and the advantage of vicinity to a royal physician ; and that early in the spring, her husband and father would arrive to convey them back to their native country.

It was difficult so to qualify my congratulations on the benefit she said she had derived from the English climate, as to express my regret at her object being so far accomplished as to justify her departure.

“ I own we are becoming impatient to get away,” said Mrs. Greysdale, too little covetous of empty compliments to perceive my dilemma ; “ I was right glad to settle here. Severe illness is apt to make one selfish ; and all I

cared for was the freshness and the shade that promised me revival. But now that we have been living here for six lonely months, and I have got well enough to think of Sophronia as well as myself, I am beginning to discover that forest scenery is a very pleasant addition to a sociable home: but that a long evening passes all the better for a plurality of voices. My health has not allowed me to mix in the society here. Soph. is too kind to leave me; and I am beginning to pity her sufficiently to wish for Mr. Greysdale and my father's arrival, to restore her to the pleasures of her age."

When I came to know my new friends better, I could not help perceiving that Miss Vavasour's tastes were those of any age but her own; and that she was much more likely to enjoy the converse of nature in the open air, and books under a cheerful roof, than the society of drawling nigger-drivers—that hateful cross betwixt Cockney and Yankee,—or even the tabby coteries of Sunning Hill.

Sophronia was a rare creature. I have no doubt there might exist, even amid the exceeding coarseness of my own fine world, women as lavishly endowed by nature. But these are mostly ruined by overtraining,—these are forced into excessive bloom by the hot-house of education. Sophronia Vavasour's mind had expanded as nature listed. A few years at a good English school had done little to tame down the lofty spirit of the young islander; albeit affording those elements of learning which now enabled her to find in her own mind a happy substitute for the peurilities of gossip life.

“Have a mind and examine it!”—might form a noble parallel to the dictum of Mickiewicz—“have a *heart* and examine it!”—I verily believe that if one of Lady Winstanley's daughters had been told to have a mind and examine it, she would have had a mind to blush, as for some indecent proposition. But Sophronia Vavasour not only had a mind and *had*

examined it! She did not bore one with the result of her examination. Though entertaining very decided opinions upon almost every subject, she rarely gave them utterance, unless piqued into it by the arguments wherewith I delighted to stimulate her spirit, because, when controverting my paradoxes, her dark grey eyes seemed to deepen into gentian blue, when contrasted with the vivid blushes painting on her noble face the earnestness of her soul.

Mrs. Greysdale delighted in hearing us dispute. The languor of indisposition still hung over her. She was, at best, less strong of mind and body than her sister; and there would she sit, on a sofa near the open windows, her eyes fixed on the upslanting lawn, towards the centre of which was a flower plot still bright with China and monthly roses, —as if to avoid watching the eagerness of our controversy.

On *my* part, of course, this fervour was assumed. I cared not a split straw whether Slavery were abolished, or Africa christianized,

or Catholics held cheap, or corn dear. But Sophronia, warm with all the best instincts of humanity, felt what she spoke, and looked what she felt, and felt so beautifully,—that I was often troubled in my casuistry by the eloquence of her eyes.

For while the poor girl fancied that the outpourings of her pure soul conveyed nothing but the plainest common sense, they expanded into a stream of the choicest poetry. The common sense of nature *is* poetry. It is only by affecting to improve nature, we ever fall into vulgarity.

This new acquaintance of mine, proved in short a wonderful relief to the monotony of discussing bills of fare, and tailor's bills, and bills of rights and bills of wrongs,—and bills for the prevention of this and suppression of that,—which supplied us with our very small talk at the Castle. I accepted the godsend of Mrs. Greysdale's and her sister's intelligent conversation, as one drinks a glass of mineral water in the morn-

ing, to assist the digestion of the day; and having kept sacred and secret an adventure which I knew would expose me to quizzing without end, used to steal away on horseback to Sunning Hill, twice or thrice in the week, as slyly as if in pursuit of a *bonne fortune*.

The sisters took no pains to attract me; that is, they attempted no allurements having any ulterior object. Mr. Greysdale was an affluent man, and his wife and her sister co-heiresses to a noble fortune. The simplicity of their modes of life was the result of choice and indisposition;—and had Sophronia chosen to appear in the world, her beauty and dowry might have secured her a far better match than a younger brother like myself. But the genuine friendship they entertained for me was as deadly a bait as the most expert chaperonical fisher of men could have devised; and I was as fairly hooked, as if angled for, a whole season, at Almack's.

A man does not know what he is about,

under such circumstances. Strolls in green lanes, drives and rides in the forest or over the springy elastic paths of Bagshot or Ascot, seem nothing, at the time, but strolls and rides and drives; and one goes on talking and listening,—listening and talking,—till one discovers, at the close of a certain number of weeks, that one has fallen,—no, not fallen,—sauntered,—desperately in love.

Snatches of sober argument recur to one's mind, as one is riding home after such a visit: and one fancies one has been doing nothing but argue,—not perceiving that they recur accompanied by the outline of a delicate nose or dimpled chin. Reminiscences of a noble sentiment steal back into one's soul, as one is closing one's eyes on one's pillow; and it does not appear that half the charm of the recollection consists in mellifluous tones, that linger on the ear like those of some favourite melody.

One day, in a fit of Cecil Danbyism, I was doing fantastical, either to surprise my fair

auditresses, or to fool away the vapours of too much hock, in which I had indulged the preceding evening: and began to jest upon the enthusiasm with which Sophronia was describing a scene of her own loved island of the west, which sounded to me exceedingly like a pilfer from Paul and Virginia.

“ I abhor what is called fine scenery ! ”—said I, as languidly as any Creole could have uttered it. “ I never wish to fatigue my eyes with a wider contemplation than this pretty little lawn, with its drooping larch yonder, and the old elm tree in the corner. Are there not painters in the world to bring rocks and glaciers to *us*, and save the cost and care of travel? One might buy a Claude for half the cost of a journey to Greece: and a fine Salvator for the amount of a tour in the Abruzzi, without reckoning the risk of being shot by briganti in the attempt.”

“ How easy it is to discover when Mr. Danby is talking from his heart, and when for effect,”

observed Sophronia, with a smile, suddenly addressing her sister. “No, no! you do not think a syllable you are saying to-day! You are only good-natured enough to startle our rusticity with a little rhodomontade.”

Mrs. Greysdale attempted to check her sister—but Sophronia was in the vein to be candid.

“Do you remember, Annie,” said she, “how, the day of our first strange meeting with Mr. Danby, we were surmising after he left us who or what he might be,—and I told you at once he was of the court, courtly?”—

A glance at my precious person conveyed a hint that this was no great stretch of perspicacity.

“You are mistaken!” said she, replying to my look, “it was *not* your dress,—it was *not* your manners. The young gentleman who comes from Bond Street to tune our piano, is quite as affable, and much more dressy.”

“The people at the Royal Lodge, probably, afforded you some little insight into my condi-

tion, as a pretext for your doing me the honour of admitting me to your acquaintance," said I, with considerable bitterness, for I was stung home.

"No—it was your *voice*,—it was the hypocritical modulation of your voice that satisfied me you had moved in the best society," replied Miss Vavasour, with provoking coolness. "I saw that you were 'a most delicate monster;' that you had a voice for me, and another for Annie,—a third for the pony,—a fourth for the lodge-keepers:—there was nothing natural about you!"

"Except my undisguised admiration for my newly-made acquaintances," said I, in a tone of such genuine fervour, that Sophronia was forced to add—"Why, to own the truth, you *did* appear to like us; and that was encouragement enough for us to like you in return,—and upon trust."

"I trust I have redeemed my credit?" continued I, in the same tone:—and these sort of

allusions, often renewed, brought us to the very verge of something more than the mere acquaintanceship to which it was desirable we should restrict ourselves.

Not that I was any longer in doubt as to the object of my preference. Mrs. Greysdale's gentle languor was, in the long run, far less attractive than the ready flow of Miss Vavasour's conversation. But I was not so blinded by her merits, as to be unaware that we should make an ill-assorted couple,—with all the disparity between us of eighteen years' difference of age, to say nothing of those of birth and fortune.

In order, therefore, to keep the sisters blind to the impropriety of my frequent visits, under such circumstances, it behoved me to abstain from even those common overtures of courtesy, which sometimes startle a woman into remembering that there exists a hubbub which calls itself the world, wherein are tongues both forked and venomous. I assumed, therefore, with them a tone of seniority for which, though

entitled by my years, I did not feel myself by any means qualified by sentiment or appearance; for, like Anacreon, I fancied that my gray hairs added new brilliancy to the rosy garland of love; a sentiment which I forbear to give in the original, out of respect for the country gentlemen.

Sophronia was a charming musician. The best music of all countries was familiar to her. But sometimes, in her *very* holiday moods, her sister would persuade her into favouring us with certain exquisite ballads, of which she always *said* the airs were Creole melodies, and the words from Withers, or Herrick, or Fletcher, but for which I have since so vainly sought, that I am convinced both poetry and music were her own.

It was a rare indication of the Cecil Danby divining rod, to have discovered such a well-spring of delight as freshened that agreeable autumn!—I did not venture to ask myself whether I deserved it. In the presence of the

sisters, I thought only of them : devouring every look and every word of Sophronia, as if female words and looks were new to me as to Robinson Crusoe ; and when absent, reconsidering them over again, in the hope of developing the nature of their peculiar charm.

But, alas ! in so happy a position as I then occupied, one may keep one's secret, but one's secret will not keep itself. While I flattered myself, ostrich that I was ! of being invisible because hiding my head, my visits to two mysterious ladies at Sunning Hill had become a standing jest at Windsor Castle ; and as standing jests at the Castle very soon take wing, Mrs. Brettingham began to understand the motive of my strict attention to my official duties and the rarity of my visits to town. For when I *did* make my appearance, she received me with demonstrations of delight which ought to have sufficiently betrayed the hollow nature of her regard. Had she loved me, she must have exploded into tears or indignation, whereas she was fuller of blandishments than ever.

On the other hand, the frankness of my new friends had imparted such powers of discernment to my eyes, that I saw at once not only the duplicity of Mariana, but the meanness of the husband, who for his worldly advancement's sake, suffered his honour to be thus compromised; nor could I help contrasting the sneakiness of Brettingham, a man commanding universal respect as belonging to the best clubs and giving the best dinners, with all I had heard from Annie and Sophronia of the tenaciousness of West Indian husbands! Mrs. Greysdale, indeed, seemed proud of the jealous temper of her husband, as of a domestic virtue; and had more than once assured me she was satisfied her husband would kill *her* on the spot, had he grounds for suspecting the prudence of her conduct.

“And so would I Sophronia, should I ever enjoy the happiness of being her husband,” muttered I, in the depths of my heart; for *there* at least I no longer disguised from myself the earnestness of my passion.

After all, of the various moods and tenses of human happiness, give *me* the indicative of *amo* ! The attainment of our ambitions is a troubled joy. As in skaiting, a sprawl on the ice or a plunge into the chilly waters below, may at any moment reverse our position. The pleasures of eating bring the pain of indigestion,—of drinking, head-ache. It is only the delirium tremens of love which surrounds us with an atmosphere of delight, poetizing the prose of life ; and, by rendering every breath we draw a sigh of tenderness, investing the meanest of our actions with the fairy tints of romance.

Never had I been fully conscious of this before ! Boys are ashamed of owning themselves slaves to the tender passion, even to themselves. In Emily's time, I should have blushed to plead guilty to such an accusation ; in Helena's, I treated the matter as a jest. As one advances in life, one grows more sincere with oneself. I did not deceive myself *now* ; I saw clearly that the hour of the day spent at Silwood Cot-

tage was fairly worth the remainder of the twenty-four !

But how was all this to end ? Though fluttering in the sunshine of prosperity, I had not a guinea I could call my own ; nothing to meet the horrible parchment rapacities of a prudent family,—nothing wherewithal to endow a family of my own ! Mr. Vavasour was shortly expected home with his son-in-law ; and how would he relish the idea of a beggarly Honourable with an income mainly dependent on the caprices of royalty, as the husband of his charming daughter ?

I swear,—and though Jove may laugh at lover's perjuries, I have no doubt he looks very grave at perjuries uttered between author and reader,—I SWEAR that such was my sole motive for refraining from a positive declaration of my sentiments to Sophronia Vavasour. I was determined that her father or Greysdale should sanction my pretensions to her hand, ere I attempted to hamper her by an engagement ;

and however great the difficulty of controlling my inclinations, used to go and sit by her work-table, morning after morning, or saunter with her up and down the little terrace of the garden, through fog, or frost, or snow,—the happiest of mankind; yet never approach within millions of miles the one short question which was to render such happiness permanent.—So even was the tenor of our days, that the besotted Cecil Danby had not leisure to perceive

How pleasantly and fast the days succeeded,
With one who felt and thought so much as he did !

He felt satisfied, however, that Sophronia understood his motives and respected them. Clever as she was, all the workings of my mind must be apparent to her, as those of bees in a glass hive. Nay, I sometimes detected on the part of Mrs. Greysdale certain glances of intelligence, when I invited Miss Vavasour to walk or ride, purporting to say,—“ Go with him, Soph,—go with him. If not engaged, it is only because Mr. Danby has too much deli-

cacy to entangle you without the sanction of your father."

One day, as I was bidding them farewell, I thought I saw a look of anxiety in Sophronia's countenance. I could almost have sworn that tears were gathering in her eyes as I quitted the room.

"If, after all," mused I, as I proceeded briskly along the road towards Black Ness Gate, "she should *not* feel certain of my affections? If she should think me trifling with her, and resent the reserve of my conduct?"—

I had half a mind to ride back and satisfy myself about those moistened eyes. But I thought better of it, as one says when one thinks worldly-wise. The weather was unpropitious. Besides, I was afraid the servants might smile or look wise on seeing me return. I was afraid Mrs. Greysdale would elevate her eye-brows, and, perhaps, utter some expressive interjection. I was afraid, in short, of being

laughed at; and so, went my way, leaving Sophronia to weep if she thought proper.

I was resolved, however, that another day should not elapse without bringing us to an understanding.

On reaching the Castle, I found an express awaiting me;—not a royal one,—a letter from my brother!—"Lady Ormington had undergone an attack of brain-fever, and was not expected to live out the night." It was necessary I should jump into my chaise and hasten to town. I was conscious of having been already too remiss in my attentions to my mother.

It was December. The weather was bitter and boisterous. The rain rattled against the carriage windows, as I proceeded, at first through dusk and soon through utter darkness, along the London road. On Staines bridge, I remember the gusts of wind met us so sharply, that I felt as if we might be blown over the parapet, into the freezing waters; and never shall I forget the shrill shrieking of the blast

over the dreary expanse of Hounslow Heath. It was a real comfort to reach the suburbs, and hail the cheering lamps and bustle of the approach to town.

My mind misgave me that I should arrive too late ; or rather, Heaven forgive me, I almost wished it might be so. There was nothing in my poor mother's character or disposition to reconcile me to the idea of her death-bed. I *trusted* it might have been brief and peaceful ; but I almost shuddered while I trusted. The dread of finding Lady Harriet canting by her fireside had long estranged me from my mother's sick room. I scarcely knew whom I might find there now !—

The first person I saw in the hall in Hanover Square was Coulson, still “ Lord Ormington's own man,” though grayer and more infirm than my lord. But Coulson was privileged by length of service to be as gouty and useless as he pleased ; and as he stood there at the foot of the stairs, while I was hurrying up the door-

steps, I thought I could discover by a sort of triumphant twinkle in his eye that all was over ; that my lady,—that is, that my lord, was “ released.”—

I was mistaken. My brother, on hearing the carriage stop, came down to meet me. Lady Ormington was not only alive, but the physician had warned him that the agonies of death might be painfully prolonged. I saw that Danby was paler than usual,—deathly pale.—His sympathies were evidently deeply enlisted in the sad scene he was compelled to witness.—

“ I—I almost regret having summoned you to take your share in these melancholy duties, Cecil!”—said he, in the kind and most brotherly tone with which he always addressed me on grave occasions. “ But I felt that I might reproach myself hereafter for not affording you occasion for a farewell word — nay, that perhaps *you* might reproach me. Such, however, is just now the state of my poor mother’s

mind, that I almost wish for your own sake you would refrain from entering the room."

One never likes to own oneself a coward. I begged him therefore to believe that scenes of such a nature had no terrors for me; and that I held it as much my duty as his own, to minister to the death-bed of Lady Ormington.

Danby made no answer; but quitted the room with an air of mournful gravity, that invited me to follow. Lady Ormington's sitting room was, as I have before mentioned, the back drawing room, her bed room the third, which was fitted up, in the French fashion, with an alcove and sofa bed.

On entering the sitting room, a powerful smell of ether was perceptible. I thought it had been used for the dying woman. I found afterwards that my brother, in the anguish of his soul, had been compelled to have recourse to such a restorative.

So frivolous is human nature in its state of civilization, that there is something grating to

the feelings in the trifling disarrangements peculiar to the recklessness of a house among whose inmates death is busy. The King of Terrors, so little a respecter of persons, is no respecter of things. Of the house he enters, he leaves open the door, and a thousand disorders follow in his train.

My mother, like all sedentary persons, was peculiarly susceptible about the exactitude of her domestic arrangements. Chairs and tables had their appointed order; and to derange a console or a book, was high treason.

Now, all was flung about without care or ceremony!—The dying woman had been cupped an hour before; and the objects connected with the operation were still lying on her satin chairs and japan tables.—Glasses, vials, towels, were scattered around in confusion; and the lady's maid, haggard, slipshod, and untidy, was rushing about in bewildered distress.

The door stood open of the bedchamber, which was still more imperfectly lighted than

the sitting room ; and already, moanings and mutterings were audible, which I rightly conjectured to proceed from the sufferer.

“ I was not aware that my poor mother was sensible?” said I, addressing my brother. But Danby made no reply : he only looked paler and graver than before.

I entered the sick room, without noticing that in a chair close beside the door, rigid and motionless, sat Lord Ormington, as if spell-struck and unable to tear himself away ; and proceeded straight to the couch, on which, under a slight coverlet, lay the wasted form of Lady Ormington. They had placed an air cushion covered with dark silk, belonging to her easy chair, under her head, by way of affording her cooler support ; which served only to throw out into more terrible relief the whiteness of her ghastly features, and scattered grey hairs.

For there was no deception now,—no silk curls,—no becoming cap ! All had been

removed by order of her medical attendants : and, as if in bitter contrast with the coquetry of adornment to which to the last she had been so fondly wedded, her white hairs streamed over the black pillow ; combining with her closed eyes and blue lips, and, above all, the ensanguined linen staunching the blood round her neck, to augment the horror of the scene.—

I advanced to take her hand ; and the white bony fingers clutched to mine with the convulsive snatch of the dying.

But this was not the worst. As soon as the emotions which had overcome me on entering subsided sufficiently to admit of my seeing and hearing distinctly, I perceived that the moaning sound which had struck me on my arrival, conveyed the wanderings of delirium.

The woman, about to appear at the judgment seat of GOD, was back in her guilty past,—young, lovely, vain,—fluttering at Ranelagh,—parading at court.—The grey-headed,

withered, dying woman was again the wanton beauty !—

“ Sir Lionel !” she muttered—“ come hither Sir Lionel !—Beware of that fellow Coulson.—He has his eye upon us.—He is in Lord Ormington’s confidence.—To-night, at the Pantheon, you shall know more.—The Queen received me coldly yesterday, dear Lionel,—I am afraid people are beginning to talk.”

These words, though incoherently uttered,—interrupted by the gasps of failing life, and breathed through the foam that gathers on the lip of the dying,—were sufficiently audible to bring a burning flush to my cheek.

“ Ay, ay !”—gasped the sufferer, after a long interval of exhaustion,—“ it is all up with him,—it is all up with him !—I knew it would end so,—those fatal Argyle Rooms !—Hazard—always hazard !—at any time he would have sacrificed me to the dice-box.—Arrested ?—In the King’s Bench ?—And he still expects me, *me* to go and visit him in the King’s Bench !—

Disguise myself! ha, ha, ha!—a pretty risk,—with Coulson always on the watch. Take Cecil, too?—no, no!—As if he cared about the boy!—He cares for nothing but himself and the Duthé—opera-dancers and hazard—and—hazard—hazard—hazard!—Lord Ormington was right. *He* may forgive me—but I shall never forgive myself.—Minuets? ha, ha, ha!—They have not had a minuet before at Almack's these forty years!"—

Then followed those hideous gasps, that rattling in the throat, announcing that these fatal revelations were wrung from her soul by the stifling hand of death;—that her secrets escaped her heart only because her heart was "fracted and corroborate."

I now first perceived, by the deprecating glance of Danby from the bed towards the door, that Lord Ormington was present. Involuntarily, my own eyes took the same direction. Impossible to surmise whether he heard all *we* were hearing!—His eyes were fixed upon

the floor. Only the summit of his bald head was perceptible.

“If we could persuade him to leave the room,” —Danby was beginning in one of his calm low whispers. But at that moment, the broken ejaculations of the dying woman recommenced.

“The child,—hurt the child?—injure the child?—not he! Lord Ormington is a merciful man—ha, ha, ha!—very merciful. He promised if I would give up Pharaoh and Macao, and never see Lionel again, for the sake of his children, he would not expose me.—Ha! ha! ha! *For the sake of his children?* for the sake of his *purse!*—Wasn’t it, Lionel?—Ha! ha! ha! —He had not generosity enough to feel my offences as they ought to have been felt,—for if he had, I should never have offended.—Such a marriage!—But my mother told me I *could* not refuse!—family diamonds—family points.—Miss Richardson, take away the handkerchief from Bihiche’s glass case. I can bear to look at her now. Cecil! don’t laugh at me

—ungrateful fellow!—ever since you were born, you have done nothing but laugh at your mother.—And Danby,—asking me to see a clergyman,—ha! ha! ha!—as if I had not seen clergymen enough, years ago, at our public days at Ormington Hall!”—

Presently, there followed more terrible exclamations.—As the night advanced, Danby succeeded in persuading his father to retire to rest. We stationed the apothecary and waiting woman in the adjoining sitting room, on pretence that her ladyship might be able to sleep; but in reality, because we were so far brothers as to feel in common that the terrible lesson imparted by such a scene was for no ears but our own.—

For, as the fever abated and depression ensued, came moments of terror and despair almost too terrible. Her mind was still wandering; for she fancied herself standing in the body on the edge of the dread abyss which morally she was approaching.—Icy hands seemed to drag her

down to the grave with their iron grasp. Her struggles were frightful. All the night long, stood Danby by her pillow; pale as death, but strong and courageous, whispering soothing words whenever there was a chance of their becoming audible,—wiping the dew from her disfigured brow,—the foam from her lips,—and repressing the struggles of her agony.—

A dim winter morning dawned at length; not upon that muffled chamber whence every ray but that of the watchlight was excluded,—but into the adjoining room, of which in their confusion they had forgotten to close the shutters;—and the scene of piteous confusion became still more miserably manifest.—

All I feared was, that the light might rouse the man and woman who had luckily dropped off to sleep;—for to poor Lady Ormington's distraction had succeeded a calm, still more appalling, during which, in a hoarse, steady voice, she proclaimed as truths all we might have surmised to be the result of frenzy. Terri-

ble was her despair,—terrible the throes of such a death-bed!—

I have deliberated within myself whether I should advert to this, or whether the secrets of such a chamber ought not to be sacred: But having once made up my mind to read the world a lesson at my own expense, and the expense of all belonging to me, I will not tear away a page that addresses itself especially to those triflers of the day, who, absorbed by their Sir Lionels and their Bihiches, forget they will leave sons to tremble beside their couch while closing the staring eyes and smoothing the dishevelled white hairs, disordered by a repentant death-bed.

The most afflicting part of all I had to suffer, was my position with regard to Danby.

When I met him again, after a few hours' rest, I flung myself, for the first time, into his arms. For the first time, I seemed to feel that he was all the relative I had on earth. For Julia, who was absent with her husband in

Ireland, where Herries had just received a high appointment, had been always kept so properly in the dark with regard to her mother, that she knew nothing of the peculiarities of my position, and was consequently unaware of my peculiar claims on her sympathy.

With Danby, it was otherwise ; and he felt them as so high-souled a man alone can feel.—

“ I know all you are about to say to me, Cecil,” said he, earnestly returning my embrace, but silencing the determination I was beginning to express, to abstain for the future from all participation in Lord Ormington’s fortune ; “ and I appreciate your sense of equity. But reflect that the resolution you announce would be fatal to the family honour, which Lord Ormington has made so many sacrifices to preserve untarnished. If, five-and-thirty years after the occurrence of an event, of which he then overlooked the bitterness of the injury, and passed over in silence for the sake of his legitimate children, he should be dragged forth

for public reprobation by the waywardness of one who had no share in the fault, and to whom the frailty of his mother should be sacred, how poor would be the consolation to your pride!—For it is your pride only, my dearest Cecil, that suffers. You cannot bear the consciousness of pecuniary obligation to Lord Ormington!—Poor man!—do you suppose that the abstraction of a few thousand pounds from his property is the worst penalty he has had to undergo?—Do you think it nothing to afford the shelter of his roof, — the decency of his name, to the woman who had so cruelly wronged him?—Do not add to his amount of injuries, Cecil, by frustrating his wishes!”—

“It is not alone Lord Ormington whom I am injuring by accepting a portion in his family to which I am unentitled,” said I,—sullenly, “Julia and yourself are the sufferers by ——”

“You are our brother!” replied Danby. “Upon *us* at least your claims are sacred. From the moment the family estates become

my own, you inherit them from *me*,—as children of — but why waste sophistry upon that concerning which it is so impossible to argue, and so easy to feel!" cried Danby. "If you love me, Cecil, (and I am convinced you do,—it is my comfort to *believe* that you do!—) you will let all proceed as it has ever done;—you will conduct yourself towards Lord Ormington as *I* do,—you will obliterate as much as possible from your mind all we have been compelled to witness; and neither dishonour the dead nor grieve the living, by resenting what it does not belong to you, my dear brother, to pass in judgment."

Still, though solaced by his arguments, I could not refrain from bitter allusions to the hardness of my destinies.

"We do not choose our fortunes!" was Danby's mild reply. "As far as I have seen of human life, the compensations of Providence are so nicely balanced, that, even in *this* world, a more equal measure of good and evil is be-

stowed than we care to admit. I have had my afflictions, Cecil. I have laid in the grave a wife and child, such as it is a severe trial to survive. Even the joy of possessing such a treasure as I have in Jane—but we will not discuss this further!” said he, on perceiving that his allusion to poor little Arthur had driven every tinge of colour from my cheek.—“I ask it of your friendship, Cecil, which is very dear to me ; I ask it of your discretion, as fated (whatever rash struggles your unavailing generosity may attempt,) to succeed me in my family honours, to conduct yourself in this emergency with the same deference to the interests of our name and the opinion of the world, which has marked the forbearing conduct of Lord Ormington.”

I obeyed,—I will not say complied ;—for I felt that Danby was entitled to give the law to me.

According to the absurd exigencies of aristocratic life, therefore, Lady Ormington’s crimson

velvet and gilded cherubim, after being watched over with all the pomps of undertakerhood, were conveyed by an inconvenient journey to a remote family seat, to be laid among the remains of the family on which she had bestowed an unlawful heir;—nay, as if to complete the mockery of this world-serving ceremonial, “ Lord Ormington and his two afflicted sons met the body at Ormington Hall, and officiated as chief mourners at the affecting ceremony.”

So said the county paper; following up the announcement by a description of the doles distributed to the poor, the hanging of the church with black, the muffled bells, the funeral sermon!—While all the time of that consignment of the sinner to her grave, the hearts of her sons were stricken with terror as they stood by her coffin to listen to the words of the burial service—“ I know that my Redeemer liveth; and that, though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see GOD!”—

The night before the funeral train quitted London,—having complied with Danby's request that I would remain with him and Lord Ormington in Hanover Square to set off with them on their melancholy duty,—restless and irritable,—I found myself unable to resist my inclination to enter once more the chamber of death.

I knew that all had been disposed for the departure of the body at day-break ;—and concluded that the coffin, thus closed, was left there to the stillness and darkness of the night. The ceremonial of such occasions was new to me ; and I started back with horror on perceiving the mass of black plumes upon the coffin lid,—the flowing pall,—the hassocks placed around for the farewell prayers of the afflicted family :—but far more, on perceiving that a solitary mourner was *really* praying beside the dead !—

It was Lord Ormington !—so absorbed by the thoughts that bowed down his grey head

upon the pall of her whom as the bride of his youth he had loved so fondly, and for whom, as the curse of his age, he had made such mighty sacrifices, that he did not perceive my entrance into the room.

I stood there for a moment in silence, contemplating the scene.

The chamber in which Lady Ormington had breathed her last was the boudoir where, in my infancy, I had seen her absorbed, heart, soul and body, by the frivolities of life ;—where I had traced the flowers of the Axminster carpet while listening to the rustling of her brocade. And now, her corpse was lying in the chamber, into which, a hundred times, I had seen her emerge, radiant, perfumed, fluttering with vanity and the last new fashion, to welcome Sir Lionel Dashwood !—*There* stood the sofa on which they used to sit together,

Smiling as if earth contained no tomb ;

reckless of the condemnations of either this

world or the next!—And *there* stood her coffin on its trestles—the husband she had dishonoured kneeling beside it—and the son whose existence she had embittered scarcely refraining from words of execration as he gazed!—

Appalling *résumé* of the life of a woman of Fashion !

Mihi frigidus horror

Membra quatit, gelidusque coit formidine sanguis !

CHAPTER V.

La vie ne se révèle à nous-mêmes qu'avec le choc des occasions.—BRUCKER.

Curæ leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent.—SENEC.

I SCARCELY know how to account for it : but the nature of the scenes I had been witnessing inspired me with an insuperable objection to return to my service at Windsor, or my pleasures at Sunning Hill.—It was not that my views towards Sophronia Vavasour were in the smallest degree influenced by so cruel an exposition of the chances of matrimonial life. But my self-love had been so severely wounded, that I felt myself too much degraded in my own estimation to appear immediately in presence of one before whom it was my ambition to shine in the brightest colours.

I resolved, therefore, to absent myself for a time. The King, with his usual good-natured consideration, gave me a lengthened leave of absence; and at Danby's suggestion, I resolved to spend a few weeks in Paris.

“A total change of scene and companionship will afford a new colouring to your ideas,” said he. “But for the claims of my father and daughter, I could fain bear you company. Weighty duties, however, await me here. A stirring moment is at hand, Cecil.—Our friend Dawson's speech last August, which so excited the rage and amazement of my brother-in-law, was a more important indication than Herries then inferred. I flatter myself my personal influence has been instrumental, and will become still further instrumental, in accomplishing a measure without which the age we live in must fail to establish its claims with posterity to the title of enlightened.”—

Such was the first hint I received of the important measure about to paralyze the wis-

dom of parliament,—the Catholic relief bill ; —a measure received with rough music by the rabid rage of Protestant intolerance ; and branding even the sacred Gog and Magog of Toryism, Wellington and Peel, with the infamy of having grown in wisdom as they grew in years, and swallowing with a good grace the salutary dose about to be inflicted as a drench.

Malum consilium est, quod mutari non potest ;

but though satisfied of the wisdom of the recantation of the Tories, I was not sorry to avoid hearing the matter battled over at Windsor,—next to Oxford the stiffest stronghold of High Churchism. Arguments against an inevitable measure are to me as insupportable as the whistling of an easterly wind ; and when, some weeks afterwards in Paris, I improved my mind with the reported speech of plausible Sadler, the fiddle-faddler, the man in armour set up by the Newcastle interest to do battle for the great tithe-cause, it afforded me a

relief almost as great as that conceded to the Catholics, to have escaped hearing its clauses subdivided into slips, and distributed at dessert at all the dinner tables of the season like the mottoes of French sugar plumbs.

Let it not be imagined, *ad interim*, by my gentler readers, that I had courage to tear myself from England, without having fully ascertained that all was well at Silwood. But Greysdale and his father-in-law were not expected to arrive in England before the end of March;—and, remote from the influence of Sophronia's eyes, and viewing the question dispassionately, I was now more than ever of opinion that it was indispensable to submit my pretensions, in the first instance, to the paternal wisdom of Mr. Vavasour.

I had chosen Paris as the object of my excursion, simply because suggested by my brother,—for I was in the humour to be impelled hither or thither by any one who felt interest enough in me to direct my movements.—

But once fairly off, I would have given worlds to return ; and on reaching Paris, the noise and bustle of the place so disgusted me, that it needed all my self-command not to order post-horses the following morning.

Instead of the six weeks premeditated, I was resolved that *one* should suffice to execute certain commissions I had undertaken ; and that, without fear of the imputation of inconsistency before my eyes, I would make my way back again on some decent pretext of business. All my journey long, I had thought of nothing but Sophronia ; and now, the unhomeishness of an hotel garni made me sigh for the snuggerly at Silwood.—I wanted those grey eyes to cheer me ; I wanted that melodious voice to persuade me into charity with the world.

At the close of a couple of days, new regrets brought her more forcibly than ever to my mind. The weather was just that soft sunshiny deceptious season, which, at the commencement of February, in Paris, often deludes

one into a belief that the year has suddenly stepped forward into May,—passing over the two bleak intervening months; and after a brilliant morning on the Boulevarts and afternoon in the gardens of the Tuileries, I felt so revived, that I could not forbear regretting I had not reserved my trip to Paris for my honey-moon expedition, so as to enable me to enjoy those pleasant sounds and sights with a companion impressionable as my Sophronia. But in a career like mine, to-day and to-morrow are apt to gain the ascendancy over yesterday.

Having known Sir Charles Stuart in Portugal,—I could do no less than present myself at the Embassy; and who has not felt, at some moment or other, the charm of renewing old associations by the “do you remember the day that,”—or “were there ever such pleasant people as those so and sos!”—Sir Charles was a man to render such reminiscences sufficiently exciting:—and I found the house and its society altogether so attractive, that, at the

end of the week, I had of course forgotten my precipitate project of return.

Fourteen years had elapsed since my last visit to the *città ridente*; and the changes effected in the interim, if not striking were amusing. Stone and mortar had done little. Very few public improvements:—only an expiatory chapel or two bearing inscriptions in perpetual commemoration of Talleyrand's apophthegm, that "*les Bourbons n'avaient rien appris, ni rien oublié.*" All that activity of monumental creation which Napoleon had promoted as a gag to the murmurs of the most vain-glorious people on the face of the earth, when tempted to grumble at the cost of his imperial game of war, had ceased; and Paris, under Louis XVIII. had betaken itself with dutiful loyalty to a gouty chair.—

But if the influence of an ancient dynasty were perceptible in the retrogression of public improvement, it was much more so in the advance of public demoralization. But that

grace and wit were wanting, things were almost as bad as in the time of the Régence or Louis XV. ; though so incongruously organized, that a more profound thinker than myself might have moralized twenty volumes upon their strangeness.

Louis XVIII. to whom I suppose his confessor tendered *in extremis* the same confessorial consolation offered by the Abbé Edgworth to his unfortunate predecessor Louis XVI. “ Fils de St. Louis! montez au ciel!”—must have found himself somewhat encumbered by flesh and the frailties that flesh is heir to, for such an ascent. A voluptuary without grace or spirit, there had been in his time a *maitresse en titre*, a right royally royal *cuisine*, and all the regal indulgences that tend to add a hair shirt to the other pontifical garments of the officiating Archbishop of Paris.

In *his* time, the robes of royalty were of the easiest shaping ; and a general laxity followed of course the example of the court, till unhappy

parallels came to be instituted between the Duchesse de Berri of our own age, and the Duchesse de Berri of a century before.

On the accession of the reigning King, a man under the dominion of priests and game-keepers, it was not so easy a matter to tear down at a moment's notice the festoons of roses with which society had been adorned under his predecessor. It was like the imperfect conversion of the N of Napoleon into the L of Louis, on the façade of the Louvre. Faithful to the memory of an early love, the King, in order to *secure* his fidelity, receded as much as possible from the temptations of the world; and it was consequently easy to incur for a short time, in his presence, the mask of hypocrisy with which courtiership saw fit to conceal its joyous visage.

But though Charles X. was virtuous, there were plenty of cakes and ale. My lord Duke dined *au maigre*, on lentiles and *morne à la Béchamel* with the King; and supped on

foie gras, pâté de Perigord, and white hermitage with the lady of his thoughts. The petticoats of the opera dancers were lengthened by command of the *menus plaisirs*; and Seminaries arose, both in Paris and the suburbs, which caused as loud an uproar against the Jesuits as now against the fortifications; though the time never came for either Jesuits or Artillery to take up their position.

But the consequences of the restraint which the society of the *petit Château* imposed upon itself to conciliate the King, were *bien autre chose*! Most people have read those curious memoirs of Dangeau, written as if expressly to exemplify the littleness of the illustrious.—Now the reign of Charles X., with its stern Dauphiness and skittish Madame resembled *comme deux gouttes d'eau*, the declining years of Louis XIV. with its solemn Madame de Maintenon and brilliant Duchesse de Bourgogne:—the same intolerance, the same levity! Madame de Stael (not the Baroness) when she describes

herself in her convent putting ink into the font of holy water, so that, when the nuns crossed themselves on the forehead at midnight, they might arrive in the chapel hideous as so many demons, never played wilder pranks than the belle Princesse of the Pavillon de Marsan;—and the King's Majesty, absorbed by prayers and parties de chasse, had little leisure to read lectures for her emendation.

From all this, arose an order of society “pleasant but wrong:”—*very* pleasant, I am certain, *very* wrong I am afraid;—fifty times worse at all events than when, peccadillos being courtly virtues, they were kept within moderate dimensions to be entitled to appear openly *en manteau de cour*.

The morality of either court or city, however, was no affair of mine. *I* was not the royal confessor, or Archbishop of Paris. All I saw in the *coterie du petit chateau* was a group of pretty, witty, gracious, graceful women, whose Cavaliers exhibited a happy

admixture of the manly habits of Englishmen and the polished manners of Frenchmen; addicted to hunting and shooting, whist and the Italian opera,—steeple chases and bals de l'opéra; and after a brilliant soirée or two spent in their society, I no longer wondered at the multitudes of my fair countrywomen and dark countrymen, who annually mark their preference for the sparkling coteries of Paris, over the heavy machinery of the social system of Great Britain.

French politics, on the other hand, are matters of too effervescent nature for a man of my indolent habits to uncork. If the wisdom of our English parliament be inscrutable to the blindness of puppy eyes, Heaven knows the turbulence of the French Chamber is fifty-fold more puzzling.

Like Charles X., therefore, who, the more uproarious the liberal party and the more critical the session, only redoubled the number of his *battues*, making war upon the boar

and roebuck, while his ministry made war upon the press, I prefer dwelling upon the pastimes of Paris to its political struggles.

Let me not be thought so ungracious as to have omitted to inquire, on my arrival, after the health of the misunderstood angel in the Rue du Montblanc, whom *I* was supposed to have comprehended. A day or two after reaching Paris, I proceeded to leave cards for Monsieur le Comte and Madame la Comtesse Anacharsis de la Vrillière; when, by the peculiar smile of the concierge, I saw that I was committing some species of blunder; and it is no joke to blunder in a city, where it is proverbially said of blunders—*C'est pire qu'un vice, pire qu'un crime,—c'est un ridicule!*

“*Il paraît que je me trompe, mon cher?*” said I, addressing the man with the familiarity which does not authorize a Parisian menial to be familiar in return.

“*Monsieur est étranger!*” he replied, shrugging his shoulders, as if the word foreigner

were an excuse and apology for any amount of stupidity. "If Monsieur were not *étranger*, he could scarcely be ignorant that Monsieur le Comte de la Vrillière, who once resided in this Hotel, is now called Monsieur le Comte de St. Gratien, from the fine estate he purchased in Normandy twelve years ago."

"The Comte de St. Gratien?—Not the present *Ministre de l'instruction publique*?" cried I,—recalling to mind how little the line of policy or politics I had heard attributed to that essentially Bourbonian statesman, were in accordance with the tenets of an old Napoleonic *Conseiller d'état*.

"Even so, Monsieur!" replied the concierge, —holding his head a little higher at the association of so dignified a public functionary with his porter's lodge, even retrospectively.—"If Monsieur designs the honour of a visit to Monsieur le Comte or Madame la Comtesse, he will find them at their official residence in the Rue de Grenelle St. Germain."

I immediately resolved to accomplish such a design on the morrow. But I had not to wait so long for the renewal of the acquaintance. Having been charged by George IV. with private letters to the King which an audience had already enabled me to deliver, on that day, in honour of so august an introduction, I was to dine at the Tuileries.

My mind misgave me, as I proceeded up that self-same stair-case where the limbs of the unfortunate Louis XVI. and his Queen so often dragged themselves while prisoners of state in their own palace,—my mind misgave me, I say, that the royal cook might have been changed on the accession of Charles X. as well as the royal confessor and physician.—*Du tout !*—His Majesty had more faith in the orthodoxy of his royal predecessor's faith as a gastronome, than as a Christian ; and the eating and drinking of the Tuileries were consequently as laudable as ever.

I have often thought,—(ye readers who eat

to live instead of wisely living to eat, pardon the digression !—) that the popular fable of the *marmite perpétuelle* which has been stewing away for three centuries in some popular gargote of the quartier des Innocens, ought to be nationally realized by the endowment of a royal *cuisine à perpétuité* for national enlightenment ; unsusceptible of revolutionary changes, unattackable by infernal machines. It is awful to consider the influence exercised by the governmental vicissitudes of the last half century on the gastronomy of France !—Other sciences have advanced ; for they had their Observatory, — their Jardin des Plantes,—their Ecole de Médecine ;—and whether of royal or national designation, the same cases of beetles, the same dissecting rooms, assisted the progress of natural history and physiology,—the same old telescopes and orreries tended to the discovery of new planetary systems.—Even during the Reign of Terror, *Martin l'ours montait à l'arbre* ; and the Board of Lon-

gitude pursued its sapient observations on moonshine, in the official star-gazery at the Barrière d'Enfer.

But what is to be expected by the stomach of *la grande nation* so long as the traditions of its *cuisine* share the fluctuating fortunes dependent upon the foolishness of its anointed Sovereigns?—Napoleon, a great man in his way, bolted his food like an American, and knew not roast from boiled.—Robespierre and Marat probably eat cutlets of *enfant Normand en papillotte*, or slices of raw young lady, *en vinaigrette*.—Even Louis XVI. fed coarsely; and from the days of Vatel to our own, nothing can have been more uncertain in France than the fortunes of cookery.—The edge of the sword and the guillotine have superseded the prosperity of the carving-knife.—

Let some enlightened legislator, therefore, intent upon restoring to *la belle France* her ascendancy over the appetites of Europe, establish and endow a college for the cultivation

of gastronomy in all its branches;—with professorial chairs of chemistry and anatomy, and every other science connected with the interests of degustation; so that the nation whose dinners and people were formerly considered the best dressed in the universe, may once more toss up an omelet against the world.

The political results of such a measure are scarcely to be comprehended at a glance.—Time was, that not a Sovereign in Europe but entertained a Frenchman in his kitchen; and we all know that the *cuisine* of a Sovereign is the nearest approach to his heart.—England, Russia, Spain,—however they might abhor the plumage of the Gallic eagle or Gallic cock,—ate unflinchingly of the Gallic *dinde truffée*; and while barbarous Russ, or crack-jaw German,—Spanish or Portuguese, issued from the state paper offices of Petersburg, Vienna, Madrid or Lisbon, French alone was admitted into that only infallible state paper,—the royal menu of those *cuisinier impérial*-ridden capitals!

It is not so now.—The Sovereigns of Portugal have returned to their garlic, and Schönbrunn to its wallowing in sauerkraut, solely because the interests of the solemn science have been destroyed by political vicissitudes ; till the classical school of Parisian cookery has become as degenerate as Shakespeare *réchauffé* by David Garrick.

To return however to the last days of Pompeii—the dinner table of Charles X.

Right opposite to me at table sat a heavy man, whose eyes were like those of a parboiled fish, whose face seemed moulded in putty, so ponderously stedfast were its muscles, and who emulated in proportions the model of the Elephant of the Bastille;—yet in whose person I seemed to discern features of a former acquaintance.—I was not mistaken. This very heavy man was Monsieur le Comte de St. Gratien,—*Ministre de l'instruction publique*.

And Madame!—I was beginning to be as full of curiosity as the fumet of the purée

giboyée I was eating, would permit.—How much less understood than ever must she be!—How cruelly out of place the leaden placeman before me, at the feet of that ethereal being,—that more impassioned Julie,—that more spiritualized Delphine!—And lo! I murmured between my teeth and my fleur-de-lysed soup spoon, “*O ma chère Thérèse!*” with an accent that Mademoiselle Duchesnois must have imitated in the “*O mon cher Curiace!*” of her Horaces.

CHAPTER VI.

Avec le bec de l'oiseau de proie, l'œil clair et froid, la parole douce, elle est polie comme l'acier d'un mécanicien. Elle émeut tout,—moins le cœur.—BALZAC.

Hæc tùm multiplici populus sermone gaudens.—ÆNEID.

AMID the glare of that brilliant banquet, I was seated beside the Austrian Ambassadors, then young and fair, as now gracious and agreeable ; and next her, sat the English Ambassador—neither young nor fair, but as agreeable as herself.—It struck me, however, that he was less fluent than usual ; and I soon discovered the cause, in a sort of nasal chaunt proceeding from his neighbour on the other side ; of whom all I could see was a portentously stern, stiff, dark-green bérêt ;—and all I could hear, a jargon of mingled pedantry and

devotion, like all Geneva,—(I mean the puritanical city, not the spirit of that name,)—corked up and iced for use.

Gods! how the woman did prose!—It must go against the grain of a Frenchwoman to prose,—so fluently easy is their natural elocution.—But this one, prosed as if prosing for the whole nation.—And so she was!—for it was no other than the wife of *Monsieur le Ministre de l'instruction publique*!—“*Oh! ma chère Thérèse!*”—

Well! if I had been gifted with common sense, it was no more than I might have expected. The coquette of five-and-twenty was, at forty, a *savante* and a prude. She, who had talked buttercups to me in our drives in the Bois de Boulogne, till I grew as de-pastoralized as a lord mayor,—and who had minced metaphysics small enough for the swallow of a canary bird, till I became as material and matter-of-fact as Grimod de la Reynière,—now talked precisely in the style of the *premier*

Paris, or great letters of a Ministerial Journal!—She had the interior of Africa as completely at her finger tips as the Missionary Society; and was in correspondence with a tribe of Japanese Numbo Jumbos about the Tâtar origin of the Loo Tchoo language.

It answered!—" *La femme d'un homme politique*," says a clever writer of the day, "*est une machine à gouvernement, un mécanique à beaux complimens, à révérences; c'est le premier, le plus fidèle des iustrumens dont se sert un ambitieux*."—Madame de St. Gratien was a leading article with the Dauphine, and a luminary of the court of Charles X. It was even whispered that her influence had assigned to the weighty Anacharsis his present eminent position. Thérèse was no longer *incomprise*. She was understood from the Indus to the Pole—nay, I believe, she talked all the dialects of the intervening lands.—She was said to write pamphlets for the Ministry,—those bits of scribbled paper without which the kite of

an administration cannot steady itself, or rise high enough for popular applause ; and with such a head, and such a bérêt to cover it, I no longer wondered at her having silenced the pleasant chat of my friend Sir Charles !

I flattered myself meanwhile that the Administratrix of Public Education would have been as glad to drop the acquaintance of Cis. Danby, as he, hers. And so perhaps she would. But the Honourable Cecil was now a man whom the King of England delighted to honour, and consequently highly deserving the notice of the obedient humble servants of the King of France.

Immediately after dinner, therefore, from which it is customary in France to emerge in couples, like the Noah family entering the ark, or the *dramatis personæ* arranged on the stage at the close of a comedy,—Madame la Comtesse de St. Gratien dropped the arm of her cavalier, the General in waiting, as starch, stiff, and we ll matched with her as the twin

towers of Notre Dame, and advanced towards me with a speech of recognition, hard, well composed, and lengthy as one of the tirades of Corneille.—Poor Monsieur de St. Gratien !—As Xenarchus hath it, εἰτ' εἰσιν οἱ τεττιγες οὐκ ευδαιμονες, ὧν ταις γυναιξιν οὐδ' ὅτι οὐν φωνης ενι—

All this was a sad bore—but I bore it as heroically as she inflicted it heroically.—She next carried me off into a corner, as a kitten is carried off in the mouth of an old cat ; and began congratulating me upon my success in public life, as gravely as if I had been achieving European renown, or civilizing wigwams on the Gambia. It was in vain I assured her that my functions were limited to shining forth on galas and levee days—that I was a mere piece of state furniture, without political influence.

She chose to know better,—she chose to see in me that object of odium to the multitude and adoration to the select few,—a favourite ;

—and forthwith set about proposing to me an interchange of national archives, state papers, duplicates of the royal libraries, and the arts and sciences know what beside.

I had no words to answer her.—I knew not what the deuce she was talking about; and took refuge in the manœuvre I have usually seen Frenchmen adopt towards women who talk about the deuce knows what,—by executing a series of profound bows of acquiescence.

Positively, these Frenchwomen are wonderful creatures!—There are plenty of clever Englishwomen,—but they are to the manner born. The discreet damsels who write about Political Economy have been swaddled in foolscap and dieted from their youth upwards on printer's ink; while the astronomeress of forty was made to play with baby-house orreries at four years old. Miss Burney and Miss Edgeworth were the wise daughters of learned fathers; and the charming Mrs. Norton is the daughter, and grand-daughter, and sister of wits.

But snatch a Frenchwoman from whatever station of life you think proper,—take a *ravau-deuse* from her joint stool or a Duchess from her *tabouret*, and such is their instinctive tact for *les convenances*, that each will assume the tone and bearing becoming her new station.—What sovereign born, ever queened it better than Josephine? — What pedant born, ever prosed it better than my Thérèse of the boudoir, —my aërial love,—once mystical as a melody of Schubert and vapourish as an Ossianism of Scheffer,—but now, as matter of fact as a problem of Euclid. I own I trembled as I listened. Had Madame Necker risen from the grave with one of her rectangular dissertations à la Père Nicole in her stony mouth, I could not have felt more paralyzed.

Fortunately, the ko-too of life is easier to assume than its softer emotions. Respectful as if in presence of the Schah of Persia, I promised myself “the honour of taking the earliest opportunity to offer my most humble homage

to Madame la Comtesse de St. Gratien :”—then, with a bow worthy of a *grand Chambellan*, glided through an open door into the adjoining gallery, where the ladies of Madame were waiting the issue of a colloquy between their royal mistress and the King.

“ *Dégèlez moi, par pitié !*”—whispered I, to a charming woman, to whom I had been that morning presented by the Duchesse de Raguse. And I forthwith proceeded to do into French for her William Spenser’s graceful poem of “Love and Reason ;” describing myself as little Love, (a charming little love of six and thirty!)—shivering under the shadow of the marble figure of *la Raison sévère*, as exemplified in the lady of Monsieur le Ministre de l’instruction publique.

“ *Ah ! cette femme !*”—was all I could elicit in reply, from the pretty fluttering creature, who would not trouble herself to bestow more than a shrug of the shoulders and an interjection upon a being so antithetical to her-

self, that she seemed afraid of disorganizing her mind by allowing it to dwell on such an object.

Nevertheless, I observed that Monsieur le Comte and Madame la Comtesse de St. Gratien, occupied a highly honourable position in those formal salons,—the temperature of which was considerably refrigerated since my last visit. The official couple possessed in a supreme degree the decent gravity of office. Their bow and curtsy,—their exits and entrances,—were perfect as if studied under Baptiste and M^{elle} Mars. If they had been carved in wood to order, to fill for the satisfaction of the public eye the administration of public instruction, they could not have looked more soberly wise, more severely rational.—What a well assorted couple,—*que de dignité—que de raison!*—*Voilà en effet, des gens de bien!*—One was tempted to exclaim when one saw them engaged in sober palaver with Charles X., “*qui, ut rationem nullam afferrent, ipsâ auctoritate me frange-*

rent!" Yet *this* was once the *bon vivant Préfet* of the empire ;—and *that*, the languid, fantastical *femme incomprise* !—

Madame de la Bélinaye, the graceful woman to whom I had applied for release from my nightmare, was one of those charming creatures one seldom meets out of Paris, content to shine as an exquisite component segment of a circle, without ever seeking to detach herself from the canvas as a prominent feature.—The ambition of a French beauty is to be "*belle parmi les belles*"—of an English beauty, to make other women look ugly.—An English beauty likes to eclipse, and longs to astonish.—Madame de la Bélinaye and others of her kind, would have been shocked at the idea of astonishing. A woman *parfaitement comme il faut*, should never appear where she is not too well assorted with the time and place, the season and the scene, to produce or wish to produce so vulgar a sensation.

On making her acquaintance, it never occurred

to me to ask myself what might be her age,— what her position in the world. She was so admirably dressed, her gauze turban so light, so fresh, *si bien posé*,—and the ringlets accompanying it were so silken,—her form was so exquisitely moulded, her hand so slender and so well-gloved, that I was too enchanted with *her tournure* as a whole, to analyze its parts.— She was thoroughly “*charmante!*” After all, why should not dress have its charm as well as any other accomplishment? People fall in love with a woman’s singing or drawing;— purely artificial acquirements, — addressing themselves to the eye or ear, and not a whit more indicative of refinement of taste than the fastidiousness which produces a chef d’œuvre of *l’art de la toilette!*

It is absurd to underrate an instinct so essential to the garnish of society. Look at the result of such contempt, in those figures of fun which disgrace the public places of England;— consolidated rainbows,—moving flower gar-

dens,—masses of flowers and feathers, heavy trinkets and dirty finery,—who expend fortunes in haberdashers' shops for the express purpose of making themselves ridiculous.

Madame de la Bélinaye, I am convinced, had never been in a haberdasher's shop in her life!—The few ornaments of her dress were so simple, so subdued, and owed their merit so entirely to their appropriateness to her compact figure and well-turned head, that one could not fancy her otherwise than one saw her at the moment.—Her dress appeared intrinsically a portion of herself.—It was impossible to say, as one often does of English women, “how much better she would have been with,—or without,—so and so!”—

It was the same with her conversation. No wonder the fable of the little Princess who dropped pearls and diamonds from her lips, had its origin in France!—Every thing that fell from her lips was either sparkling with liveliness, or *bien arrondi*,—*bien perlé*,—by its

polite and gracious form.—After talking with her a whole evening, it would have been difficult to recall a single sentence she had uttered. Yet at the time, every phrase seemed so distinct, every sentiment so graceful, that one fancied one must remember them for ever.—She was, in short, a creation of four centuries of civilization ;—one of those fleet, sleek, slender products of the racing stud of refinement,—the Newmarket founded by Francis I., with a king's plate for elegance of costume, manners, and conversation !—

I am almost afraid that the night of my presentation to Madame de la Bélinaye, the face which haunted my sleepless pillow was adorned by an aërial turban, and looked at me through two hazel eyes rather than through the grey orbs of my Sophronia.—But it could not be helped !—

My attention, however, was not wholly absorbed by this attractive woman.—There was a great deal to interest one at the Tuileries.—

The game of courtiership is always more exciting when there are combinations to be made; and the rival camps of the two daughters-in-law of the King,—the childless Dauphine and the young mother of the heir presumptive, was highly diverting.—The severe prudery of the former, the thoughtless Italian gaiety of the latter, produced incessant disgusts, and endless jealousies; not the less irritating for the harness of family affection by which they were yoked together.—

I sometimes fancied I could discover in the two royal sisters-in-law, the Elizabeth and Mary of other times. But Madame was wanting in the beauty, and the Dauphiness in the enlightenment, forming the best characteristics of the two queens; though I believe the same motive lay at the bottom of their antipathy:—*i. e.* that the son of the one was to inherit the dominions of the other.

I cannot say that, either as Madame d'Angoulême or Dauphiness, I ever fancied the lady

whom Louis XVIII. used to call on state occasions his Antigone.—She appeared to me a hard disagreeable woman ; and though willing, in compliance with the exhortations of the Faubourg St. Germain, to “ *respecter ses malheurs*,” I never could help feeling that to be so remarkably ugly was the greatest *malheur* of them all.—It is as unpardonable a fault in a woman to be unsightly, as in a queen to have given no heirs to the throne.—

That I should espouse the cause of the Princess who had the advantage of numbering Madame de la Bélinaye in her household, was inevitable ;—a partizanship soon discovered,—for under such circumstances, the different members of the royal circle were as definitely ranged to a discerning eye, as the different pieces on a chess board :—the two colours,—the two parties,—being utterly distinct, though inextricably mingled together by the chances of the game.

Madame la Comtesse de St. Gratien was of

course a rigid Delphinian. — Stiff in the farthingale of prudery as whalebone could make her, Thérèse had no longer a monitor in her heart to bespeak indulgence for the frailties of her sex.—I swear I believe that women, like official men, have the faculty of dismissing every thing from their minds which they do not wish to remember; and that she had really forgotten there was ever a moment when she had fancied the bulbous Préfet a monster and Cecil Danby her better half. And yet, there is no saying!—It was perhaps because conscious of a vulnerable heel that she had invested herself in such a tremendous pair of jackboots!—

Of all those who bristled up against the pleasures of the little coterie of Madame, she was the fiercest.—Too loyal to conceive a fault in any royally descended personage, Madame de St. Gratien took refuge in pitying the Princess whom she could not presume to blame. —She pitied her for having such bad advisers, —for being surrounded with men without heads

and women without hearts ; she pitied her for not being amenable to the prayers of the congregation or the good example of her illustrious sister-in-law ;—and above all, she pitied her for having such a frivolous woman in her confidence as that Madame de la Bélinaye. And the way in which Thérèse uttered the words “frivolous” and “*that* Madame de la Bélinaye,”—would have been a study for any actress intent upon distinguishing herself in the part of Lady Sneerwell.

One favourite gesture of Thérèse indeed, still lingered with Madame la Comtesse de St. Gratien ;—she had possessed a wonderful knack of raising her eyes to heaven, in the paroxysms of morbid sensibility of the *femme incomprise* ; and a very slight variation of expression enabled her to turn this to account in the paroxysms of prudery becoming the lady of *l'Instruction publique*.—It was wonderful how piously she uplifted her eyes, every time she mentioned the name of *that* Madame de la Bélinaye.

One is obliged to sit patient under the weight of many a powerful exhibition of human hypocrisy. But to me, one of the vilest crocodile's eggs which the corruptions of society have hatched into existence, is the plausibility with which the unconvicted Magdalens of the world shake their heads and point their fingers at those who, "for example sake," they consider ought to be invested in sackcloth and ashes, or exhibited in a white sheet!—More than once, have I been almost moved to an outburst of bitter irony, by the severe morality poured forth upon me by such women as Madame la Comtesse de St. Gratien.—

"If it be any object to you to stand well at the Tuileries," whispered Madame de la Bélinaye—on the other hand,—at a charming soirée the following night at Madame de Rimbault's, reviving all I had fancied of the brighter days of Parisian gaiety and grace,—“do not forget your promise of offering your respects to Madame de St. Gratien.—She is a person whom it is not safe to offend.”—

“ I have no ambition here which she is likely to forward,” replied I, gazing upon my fair admonitress with an expression of countenance intending to be as eloquent as Mirabeau.—

“ If you have any friends then, whom you do not wish to expose to her virulence of tongue,” resumed Madame de la Bélinaye, “ for *their* sake, be not wanting in the common ceremonies of politeness.”

“ I will call upon her to-morrow morning,” cried I, eagerly accepting what I trusted was a personal allusion.

“ Call upon her to-morrow morning ?”—ejaculated Madame de la Bélinaye,—with one of those expressive gestures by which Frenchwomen concentrate volumes into an elevation of the eyebrow or movement of the hand.—“ *Sidonie, ma belle !*”—said she, turning towards a pretty Russian who sat beside her—“ *Monsieur Danby est il impayable !*—He talks of paying a morning visit to Madame de St. Gratien !”—

“If she could only hear that any living man contemplated so terrible a breach of decorum!” cried her friend. “But Monsieur Danby is excusable. He is a foreigner. Every thing is permitted to foreigners. *He* cannot be expected to be aware of the strictness of etiquette that prevails in the Hotel of the *Ministre de l’Instruction Publique*.”

“You are to know,” resumed Madame de la Bélinaye, “that Madame de St. Gratien, who is honoured with the friendship and esteem of the Dauphiness, is one of the most exemplary women of the day.—She goes to confession every third day; and would not touch the claw of a shrimp on Fridays.—Nothing is too rigid for her.—Her life is a series of macerations.—I know not whether it be by way of penance, but she would not receive a morning visit from one of your abandoned sex, to conquer an Empire.—If you wish to pay your respects, it must be at her official *soirée*. Monday nights are appointed for the receptions of *Monsieur le*

Ministre de l'Instruction Publique; and you cannot do better than go and kiss the footstool of the throne of our *Aspasia*."

"I cannot do better than obey any commands with which you are pleased to honour me," said I.

And I could all the better endure the prospect of this solemn visitation, because I was engaged to a ball on the following Monday at the Austrian Embassy, which would take the taste of the bitter pill out of my mouth.—

I detest all parties where men predominate.—Shrubberies are invariably the better for the introduction of a few roses and lilies amid their solemn verdure; and the better qualities of manly nature are not called into play, when there are no petticoats in the case.

It was from a little family party at the Duchesse de Dijon's, the mother of Madame de la Bélinaye, a circle exhibiting all the *agrémens* derivable from a group of lovely women, beheld in the easy negligence of

domestic life, that I proceeded to the awful Hotel of the *Ministre de l'Instruction Publique*, in whose court-yard a variety of official equipages were drawn up; while, outside the *porte cochère*, waited a long string of citadines and cabriolets, which I conjectured to belong to the Savans, forming the pit and gallery of the auditory.

Two *huissiers de service* wearing silver chains over their customary suits of solemn black, ushered me through two chambers exceedingly hot and stuffy, crowded with the worst looking and worst smelling men with whom it was ever my fortune to be in company in Paris;—the exhibition of oddly shaped heads, and still more oddly made wigs, being worthy of a perukial museum. I conclude I had never before beheld developed any *really* intellectual phrenological bumps!—

These men, who were hooked together in groups of two or more, by process of button-holding and *for* the process of prosification,

made a line respectfully for the grooms of the chambers and contemptuously for me; for I give my readers to conceive what must have been the effect produced by an essenced beau of the court of George IV. with shapely waist, curled whiskers, and all Delcroix distilling from his cambric, amid those greasy rogues,—artists, men of letters, men of syllables,—academicians, members of the Institute, and all the dirty-doggery of literature.

Every body knows the retort of the Duke of Richelieu to Restaut the grammarian, when they met at the French Academy. “*Moi, je suis ici pour ma grammaire,*” said the learned man. “*Et moi, pour mon grandpère,*”—replied the wit. Biot, the first man I met at the *Ministère de l’Instruction publique*, was there for the longitude,—I, clearly, as a latitudinarian.—But

Magis magnos clericos non sunt magis magnos sapientes,

or, as the bitter Regnier writes

Les plus grands clercs ne sont pas les plus fins !

I would not have recommended any body to talk about latitudinarians to the woman who rose to perform her three official curtseys to my three bows of ceremony, as I was ushered to the foot of her arm-chair!—She had a little *moyen age* fan of peacock's feathers in her hand, which formed a truly appropriate adornment; for never did I see a woman so conceitedly self-absorbed. Severe as a statue of Nemesis, I had done injustice to her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, by instituting a parallel between them. Queen Bess in her ruff and farthingale was light and easy by comparison; and Madame la Comtesse de St. Gratien, doing the honours of her *Ministère* to half a dozen women who looked as if dug out of the Escorial, and two hundred men who might have been de-mummified out of the Pyramids, assumed a rigidity of form and feature, reminding one far more of the print of Bloody Mary in the school editions of Hume's History of England.

How naturally one begins to talk of editions in such company!—I began to beat my brains for something square and solid enough to utter, in the audible tone wherewith I found it was now necessary to accost the stately Minerva to whom I had so often whispered trifles light as air; but whose present device was

Singula quæque locum teneant sortita decenter.

Before I had time, however, to rake up in my memory some of the musty truisms of old Votefilch, (for I was afraid to have recourse to the casket of jewels I had pilfered from Danby, —as thieves after prigging a pocket-book attempt to pass the five pound flimsies rather than the hundred pound notes,) the new Queen of Sheba fastened upon me with her project for an investigation of the archives contained in the White Tower of London; among which, she protested, were certain State Papers of the first race, carried off from Vincennes during the Regency of the Duke of Bedford.—

I hardly knew, (Eton and Oxford forgive me!) that there had been a Duke of Bedford antecedent to him who invented long-tailed sheep and short-horned cattle, or something of that description, whose bronze effigy affords roosting place to the sparrows somewhere about the North-West passage of Bloomsbury. I was scarcely aware of any other Regency than that of Carlton House;—or that Vincennes had existed prior to the time when it was rendered the Golgotha of the Duke d'Enghien, clearly by the hand of Providence, for every single *human* being concerned in the execution has made it distinctly apparent, per memoirs or protestation, that he had nothing to do with the matter. However, I recalled to mind as well as I could, for imitation, the sapient countenances of the owls exhibited at Arundel Castle;—screwed up my mouth, *and listened*,—which I take to be one of the most admirable exercises of wit, of which the human or owlsh understanding is susceptible.

For twenty minutes, did Madame la Comtesse de St. Gratien hold forth on matters connected with English history, which I am certain she had been cramming from Lingard ever since our encounter at the château; and for twenty minutes, did I continue to bow affirmatively or shake my head mistrustfully, with an *air capable*;—poor Thérèse little suspecting that she was never more thoroughly a *femme incomprise* than at that moment!

The men of Gotham surrounding us, were in ecstasies, “*Quelle femme!—que de profondeur!—que d’érudition!*” resounded on all sides; while the half dozen terrible women, wives of candidates for place or riband-hunting men of letters, uttered suppressed groans of admiration.—Here and there, an Abbè,—a race resuscitated with the Bourbons,—looked earnestly among the jostling crowd of old women in broadcloth surrounding the Minister, towards the formal circle of old women in brocade surrounding his lady, fancying per-

haps that of two doses they might be the less bitter to swallow; but so great was the privilege of approaching the Madame Necker of the day,—the Queen of the Classicists,—the pedagogue in official petticoats,—that not a soul or body of them presumed to infringe on the magic circle of l'Instruction Publique:—*risum teneatis!*—

CHAPTER VII.

Une femme qui ne veut s'apercevoir de rien, s'est aperçu de tout : il faut terriblement se tenir sur ses gardes avec elle.

BRUCKER.

Liberius si

Dixere quid, si forte jocosius, hoc mihi juris

Cum veniâ dubis.—HOR. *Sat.* 4.

ABSENCE is said to extinguish slight predilections and stimulate great passions, as the wind which fans a fire, puts out a candle.—I do not recommend people who wish to maintain the brightness of their affections untarnished, whether little loves or great ones, to expose themselves to the temptations of Paris.

It is true I made a compromise with my conscience, by treating my sojourn in the gay city as a species of carnival, preparatory to the sacred solemnities of Lent ; and as I was fully

determined to offer my hand and heart to Miss Vavasour immediately on my return, resolved to hold a sort of wake over the interment of my bachelorhood. To avoid contaminating the pure and bright affection of my soul by admixture with the follies of the hour, I accordingly sealed it up in a packet, and laid it on the shelf, till wanted.—And after all, plausibility apart, is not this the logic of the infidelities of most absent lovers and husbands?

The season of the year,—for it was all the world's carnival as well as mine,—was highly propitious to the brief madness of any wise man intent upon playing the fool. Folly is epidemic at Paris during the epoch of *bals masqués*.—The *mousse* of Champagne and the effervescence of the human spirit, are perpetually on the froth ;—and mitres and *bonnets de magistrat*,—nay, even kingly crowns, are laid aside in favour of the cap and bells. French people appear to hold their passions in command, by the turning of a peg, like the Tâtar horse

of the fairy tale—which one moment dashed through the air at the rate of a thousand furlongs an hour, and the next, stood motionless as the Caucasus;—for the cap and bells once laid aside, the *bonnet de magistrat* is resumed without any sensible diminution of wisdom or authority.—It is not so with the English.—An Englishman who knows he has been making an ass of himself, is so uncommonly ashamed of his long ears, that he thinks it necessary to herd with asses for the remainder of his days.—He does not understand the privilege of *desipere in loco*;—and though ready enough to drink, cannot acquire the art of getting sober,—by far the greater feat of the two.

My Public will infer, I fear, from my increasing prosiness, that the *Ministère de l'Instruction Publique* was doing its worst upon me. Yet I flung off the leaden chain and resumed my garland of flowers as speedily as possible: for not a moment was to be lost amid the thick-coming fêtes of that joyous season.

Ever since Helena's time, I had given up London ball-rooms.—Unless on some *very* especial temptation, I could perceive no advantage in being crushed, as in a drum of Smyrna figs, for the sake of looking at crowds of Misses as monotonous as flocks of sheep, yet inwardly ravening wolves as regarded their projects upon the lives and liberties of mankind.

But the ball-rooms of Paris,—the ball-rooms of the present day,—*parlez moi de ça!*—Instead of the monotony of those *moutonnières créatures* (as La Fontaine calls them,) the variety of a case of *colibris*, at the Jardin du Roi!—Every countenance bright with intelligence;—every face indicating by the bloom of its roses and lilies *que l'amour,—printemps de l'ame,—avait passé par là!*—a purpose in every existence,—a specific attachment,—preventing those pouts and frowns, those peevishnesses and sullennesses, arising from the contentions of London young ladies, all resolved to draw

the great prize,—to marry the Marquis, or flirt with the Cecil Danby of the day.

The doors of such a temple revolve on golden hinges to the invisible breathing of flutes!—No cross chaperons,—no Saracenic papas, ready to hurl defiance at the mustachios of the killing captain;—no grumbling,—no sympathy with horses waiting at the door!—The only object of the women is to please; the only object of the men to show them they are successful.

I trust Madame de la Bélinaye had wit enough to perceive that she was perfectly successful in fascinating the man so long successful in fascinating others; for I must plead guilty to inability to lay aside my John Bullism sufficiently to become *quite* a lady's lap-dog on such occasions.

Par trente-six printemps sur ma tête amassés
Mes modestes appas n'étaient point effacés :

and I still chose to *poser en vainqueur*.

I had been too badly brought up, in the factitious atmosphere of London clubs, to understand that there are more agreeable modes of enslaving a woman than by trying to prove you are her master.—It was not easy to emerge at once from the fastidiousness, finery, and impertinence, all but brutal, of a thorough-going London man ; who thinks that a kick inflicted by the toe of a highly-varnished Hoby, amounts almost to a caress.—I ventured, in short, the little gusts of caprice with which I had amused myself by blowing hot and cold upon Mrs. Brettingham ;—satisfied that my genuine admiration of the charming Clémentine must penetrate through the varnish of my mask.

I was not sufficiently versed in the artificialities of Parisian nature, to understand how my conduct affected her.—I have since discovered that it was not partiality for the offender, as I then imagined which induced her to overlook the offence.—But the novelty of the thing was voted highly amusing in her coterie.—

They looked upon my strange style of making the agreeable as characteristic, national, and grotesque.

The French are worshippers of novelty.—They adore the Giraffe or Chimpanzee, so long as it is neat as imported.—They fell in love with the Cossacks who invaded them, and the Bedouins whom they invaded; and were now charmed with the originality of the man so curled, perfumed, so admirably got up, who affected the *sauvageries* of a New Zealander.—I permitted myself to be jealous.—I chose to give the law where the law was usually taken.—How charming,—how refreshing!—I was worth my weight in gold, or *vinaigre des quatre voleurs*!—

“*Ah! ça ma chère, qu’as tu fais de ton brutal?*” was sometimes whispered into the ear of my charming friend, by lips which accosted me only with gracious words, and which I fancied moulded to permanent laudation!—Ignorance is bliss!—I was quite satisfied that I was

the hero of the Carnival. And so I was.—Every puppy has its day.—The loathsome ugliness of Mirabeau, the bearishness of Jean Jacques, were furiously the fashion long before the pretentious impertinence of Cecil Danby.—

The favour of the Tuileries, too, counted for something among my merits.—

Is it because crowned heads are peculiarly aware of the potency of royal favouritism, that they receive with such marked distinctions the royal pet of a brother sovereign?—I have often noticed that the claims of even an Ambassador Extraordinary, are waived in honour of the man, however ignoble, on whom his brother King's countenance is for the moment supposed to shine,—apothecary or corncutter,—Farinelli or ———; a misplaced calculation, for if *really* a favourite, he is pretty sure to be kept at home.—

I was amazingly noticed by Charles X.—His Majesty even took me pheasant shooting in the woods of St. Cloud,—a diversion, compared with which attacking the barnyard at

Ormington Hall would have been lively sport ;—and handed me his own gun to shoot at a chevreuil in a Fontainebleau battue. I would not have taken twenty such for my own Mantons ;—but the honour availed me the worth of as many Mantons as would fill the small armoury of the Tower.—

But alas ! for my patience,—the more I was honoured by the King, the more I was noticed by the wife of the King's minister ; and that horrible *partie de chasse* brought upon my shoulders cwt. upon cwt. of civilities from the ponderous couple of the Rue de Grenelle !—Thérèse chose to see and surmise nothing of my more agreeable engagements.—She would not conceive it possible that I could be enlisted in the enemy's camp.—A man who had seen the light in the Château de Boulainvilliers, could not be otherwise than the faithful humble servant of the daughter of Marie Antoinette, and of *her* faithful humble servants.—

I have abstained from all mention of Mon-

sieur de la Bélinaye, because he was one of those of whom, by tacit consent of society, it was the custom to make no mention ;—an inoffensive little man, who had been married to his first cousin by his papa and mamma, his uncle and aunt ;—and because from infancy accustomed to treat his cousin as his wife, he now treated his wife as his cousin.—All the time he could abstract from his duties as a royal aide de camp, the little Count devoted to the *Société pour encourager l'amélioration de la race des animaux domestiques* ; without surmising that its benefits might be extended to himself, as well as to the flocks and herds of his Berri estates.—But there really was very little occasion for him to trouble himself with the care of his wife.—Madame la Duchesse de Dijon, her mother, was always at hand to keep her in charge,—frequenting the same society, and cultivating the same pleasures ;—and Madame de la Bélinaye, in consequence perhaps of this perpetual maternal surveillance, enjoyed a re-

putation of irreproachability worthy of the days when "*la reine Berthe flait.*"—

I was a great favourite with the Duchess,—formerly an intimate friend of Lady Ormington at the Château de Boulainvilliers, and, in her emigration days, a frequent guest at Ormington Hall.—

I was always vastly amused, by the way, to hear the emigrants de *haute volée* perjuring their precious souls by attestations of their love and gratitude towards England; when, in fact, not one of them but feels entitled to expurgatorial droits of Paradise, from the martyrdom endured among us. Many, who from sheer starvation ate of our venison and drank of our port wine, protest that their constitutions were ruined for life by such coarse diet;—and those who made themselves most familiar with the bank notes of John Bull, despised him as a close-fisted fellow, for not pouring the contents of his purse into their lap in the form of louis d'ors.—

Among themselves, they make no secret of

these things; and it was diverting enough to see such people as Madame de Dijon recant and screw up their mouths, for a little civility to a man so smiled upon as myself by royalties, on either side the Channel.—

“*Et ce cher Prince*, how does he wear?”—she used to enquire of me, alluding to the King. “How good he was to us!—Shall I ever forget his enticing us down to that terrible fishing-village, which he has since coaxed into a great town;—but of which it may fairly be said, as of Louis XIV. and Versailles, *qu’il n’en ferait jamais qu’ un favori sans mérite*.—Your darling Lady Clermont told him I said so:—but, her French had luckily the merit of being incomprehensible. Did you ever hear the story of her begging Madame Victoire to notice l’Abbé de Westminster during her visit to London, and Her Royal Highness desiring in consequence that, at whatever hour of the day or night Lady Clermont’s favourite Abbé presented himself, he might be shown up?—little

did she suspect poor soul that our dear Vicomtesse alluded to an Abbaye some hundred feet long with towers like *les tours de Notre Dame*, instead of a *petit collet*."

"*A tour de force*, certainly!" said I, laughing.

"He was always charming, your dear King!" resumed the Duchess. "I recollect his calling Otto, the Ambassador of Buonaparte" (accenting the Italian *u* in the name of the Emperor) "a vulgar fellow, for having blunderingly addressed him as '*mon Prince*.'—He had such a delicate sense of *les convenances*!—By the way, is it true that, some years ago, when playing the part of a somewhat superannuated Orosmane to an equally superannuated Zaïre, each of them used to devote five hours a day to getting up a toilette for a visit of twenty minutes, in which both were satisfied that instead of threescore, they appeared only five and twenty?—*Il faudroit être née Anglaise pour s'engager en pareille corvée*!"—

I ventured to assure her that there was no

such thing in England as a woman of three-score.—

“True—I had forgotten that they all die of the spleen before they attain half that age!”—cried she, humouring my extravagance.—“And who can wonder!—Oh! their *vie de château!* their what they call ‘sociability!’—I lost two little *griffons*, in the flower of their age, (*mais des créatures à peindre!*) during my stay at Ormington Hall; and I am sure they died only of sympathy, from seeing your dear mother and I sit yawning at each other!—What is the use of such domestic life, I only ask you?—Look at my daughter and Monsieur de la Bélinaye, for instance. Where will you ever find in England a more domestic couple?—What unanimity!—What mutual confidence! Though absent from each other for months and months at a time (for the air of Berri does not agree with Clémentine and it is indispensable to the interests of Monsieur de la Bélinaye’s property that he should reside there a consider-

able portion of the year,—during which my daughter remains in Paris or the environs, with her family,) not a feeling of mistrust,—not a jealous inquiry on either side !—They are tranquil,—they are happy,—they are incapable of the vulgar *tracasseries*, which I so often witnessed in England. By the way, *Madame votre chère mère* was not the happiest woman in the world *en fait de ménage*.”

A hint to the Duchess that I was wearing mourning for *Madame ma chère mère*, silenced her indiscreet revelations; and I satisfied her meanwhile by assurances of my high respect for the domestic felicity of her daughter and nephew.—

To my great surprise I soon afterwards discovered that I had never yet seen Monsieur de la Bélinaye : for one fine day, there arrived a little gentleman from the country, — who figured as master at the Hotel de la Bélinaye, and at the Tuileries *l'épée au coté* and a *chapeau plumé*, as Aide de Camp ;—whom the

Dauphin called *mon cher*, and Madame de la Bélinaye *mon ami*, and I, a great bore.—The little insignificant fellow I had hitherto seen accompany Clémentine in public, and often found on the stairs of her Hôtel, turned out to be only another cousin, a sort of *souffre douleur*, to call carriages and write notes for her,—a better kind of upper servant.—

Monsieur le Comte, however, was very little more in my way than Monsieur le cousin.—My delight in the society of Clémentine consisted in the interchange of those pleasant nothings and devoted looks which, in England, are classed under the comprehensive though incomprehensible name of flirtation :—and we looked and talked very much the same, whether Monsieur le Comte were tyrannizing over his *régisseurs* in Berri, or tyrannized over by his royal master of the Pavillon de Flore.—

On the contrary, I felt more at my ease after Bélinaye's arrival.—I had sometimes fancied myself in the way at the Hotel de la Bélinaye,

while mistaking the Vicomte de Clainville for the husband of Clémentine. But now that I found it the custom of the house to tolerate the loungery of morning visits, I made myself completely at home ; more particularly because, thanks to a proposal I hazarded to Monsieur de la Bélinaye, in the style of Madame de St. Gratien's to myself, to effect an interchange of Merinos and South Downs, Norman cows and Suffolk punches, between Ormington Hall and Le Berri, I became an immense favourite with the model of marital happiness of the Duchesse de Dijon.—

It was a wonderfully brilliant carnival.—Our Ambassadress gave a ball, and Madame de Goutaut another, the fame of which remains proverbial to the present day ; and I enjoyed myself, in that brief interval between the house of mourning from which I had escaped, and the house of matrimony to which I was hastening, much as a school-boy enjoys himself on a Sunday holiday.

It is amazing how one rejuvenizes in Paris. I felt almost a boy again. I seemed to tread on air. “My bosom’s lady sat lightly on her throne.”—Clémentine was such an airy, cheery, sunshiny creature!—Like Perdita, she “turned all to prettiness and favour.”—Mariana, like most London beauties, subjected her friends to so tight a rein, that she would have hardened the mouth of an Arabian. Half my interviews with *her* used to be absorbed by peevish chidings,—reproaches for having stayed too long away, or kept her waiting, or neglected to answer a note; except indeed when, after my acquaintance with Sophronia, she had real cause for displeasure, and consequently dared not betray it.

But Madame de la Bélinaye, was like the summer’s day that wakes us with sunshine and the carol of the lark, and brightens our path with flowers. “Mere want of sensibility!” will urge some sullen *femme incomprise*.—Perhaps so!—But now that I have enjoyed a

certain experience of black, brown, and fair, whether of temper or complexion, I am decidedly of opinion that the sensibility which, like an Andalusian, carries a *dague en jarretière* to stab a rival to the heart, or which smashes looking-glasses, like Byron's Margarita Cogni, is a horrible nuisance.—

I never saw a cloud on the brow of Clémentine. I could as easily fancy one upon the pink cheeks of a Dresden shepherdess, whose transparent apron has been full of flowers, and whose glossy smiles and dimples unchanged, for more than a century.—

If I sent her one of Madame Prévost's pretty bouquets, the most *banal* compliment you can offer to a Frenchwoman, she was sure to acknowledge it by a *petit mot* full of grace and graciousness. If I claimed her hand for a waltz, she granted it with a smile that made a common form of society, a concession. Her sweetness and elegance rendered her *really* an ornament to a ball-room; and it is the multi-

tude of such ornaments which constitute the unequalled charm of the Parisian fêtes.

One morning, after one of these charming balls, I was sauntering on horseback at an early hour towards the Bois de Boulogne ; when, in the new route de Charles X., coming from the royal stud-house, I met my friend Monsieur de la Bélinaye. As I was at that very moment meditating treasons against him too heinous to be recapitulated, it bored me immensely that he chose to turn his horse's head and accompany me in my ride.—He was mounted on a fine animal of his own breeding ; and every body knows the vexation of riding with an ass who is riding on a horse, the points of which he prides himself on exhibiting.—For the sake of Clémentine, however, I bore patiently both with the horse and ass ; and was hypocrite enough to coincide in his opinion that, in a few years, the palm of jockeyship would be conceded by Newmarket to the Champs de Mars.—Ahem !

By this disgraceful concession, I brought him into so charming a humour, that I was in hopes he would ride off and leave me to the enjoyment of my previous cogitations. But the ass was obstinate as a mule, and chose to bear me company.—

“ *Apropos, mon cher Danby,*”—cried he,—as I was preparing, when we reached the gates of Bagatelle to gallop off and get rid of him,—“ *sais tu que tu as des torts graves envers ce pauvre Vicomte !*”

“What Viscount,—and what have I done to him ?”—said I, with affected carelessness.

“ *Le petit Clainville !*—I found him dreadfully out of spirits on my return from the country.—It seems you have been infringing his privileges as the cavalier of Clémentine and her mother.—During my absence, Madame de la Bélinaye very prudently selects my nearest relative as her escort in public ; and Clainville and my mother-in-law get on admirably together ; which, *entre nous soit dit,*

is not so easy a matter,—for the Duchess though a charming woman, is the very devil.”—

I bowed as acquiescingly as he seemed to expect,—and on recovering his breath, he proceeded.—

“Since your arrival, however, I find that Madame de Dijon has become horribly capricious with poor Clainville, and that even Clémentine has to reproach herself with some inconsistency in her conduct. Reflect upon this, my dear Danby!—You are here but for a short time,—for a moment, as one might say;—and you will perhaps compromise the happiness of a *liaison* likely to last for life. Clainville is the most obliging amiable fellow in the world.—He was fixed in my house like one of the chairs or tables—ready to come or go at a moment’s notice; and in leaving Clémentine to his care during my absence, it was like confiding her to the Banque de France.—It would really give me pain should any little misunderstanding arise on your account, capable of overclouding our domestic happiness.”—

“ Why not say *their* domestic happiness at once ?” thought I,—for I was exasperated by his imbecility. However, the despair of Monsieur le Vicomte was good encouragement for *me*; and I could scarcely restrain myself from giving a cut with my whip to the spirited horse which poor little La Bélinaye found it no easy matter to manage, and, galloping off while he lay prostrate in the mud, profit by the intelligence he had unwittingly afforded.

I was to meet Clémentine that night at a ball given by Monsieur de Chabrol, the Préfet de la Seine, at the Hotel de Ville; and never shall I forget how my heart throbbed when I saw her enter the gallery in her simple white dress, trimmed with natural bouquets of Parma violets, the same delicious flowers being interspersed among the diamond leaves ornamenting her hair. She was leaning, as usual, on her mother’s arm, the Vicomte obsequiously following with her fan and *flacon*—an assiduity which had obtained for him the sobriquet of *le portemanteau de Madame de la Bélinaye*.

Clémentine was engaged to begin the ball with one of the Neapolitan princes just then visiting Paris. But when I advanced to request her hand for the second quadrille or a waltz, I found myself interrupted by Madame de Dijon, who, on pretence of wanting a glass of *eau sucrée*, sent me off; and when I returned, Madame de la Bélinaye had taken her place among the dancers.

“My dear friend,” said the Duchess, leading me off towards the pillars, from which we commanded a view of the adjoining room where Clémentine was dancing, with the Vicomte posted behind her close as her shadow,—“this really must not go on!—Consider, *mon cher Danby*, what you are about. You are going away, next week,—*pas vrai?*—and for eight days’ amusement, you would actually sacrifice the peace of mind of a very estimable man.—Clainville is a worthy creature,—*un homme d’honneur*, who would give his life for Clémentine or her husband; and

my daughter is a woman perfectly well brought up, and *incapable de manquer à ses devoirs*. The world views their friendship with approbation.—In *your* case it would be otherwise. Society, so rigid in its principles, would feel that *your* attentions were of a different nature. You are here *en passant*.—Your love for Clémentine might inflict a lasting injury. *Croyez moi !* desist from assiduities that are beginning to be noticed ; and prove yourself worthy to be the son of Lady Ormington, and an object of esteem to the august family of the Bourbons.”

I could scarcely maintain a grave countenance at this absurd adjuration.—I had often been assured that *la morale* of Paris was “*affreuse* ;” I had not expected to find it ridiculous.

But stranger far than the appeal of the husband and mother,—or if not stranger, far more marvellous,—was Clémentine’s hint in the course of the evening, that, finding my civilities

a source of inquietude to her family—(including, I suppose, Monsieur le Vicomte de Clainville—little brute!—) she should be really obliged to me to refrain from further visits—further nosegay-sending,—and so forth;—and on my proceeding to accuse her in no measured terms of a preference for the *portemanteau*, she quietly replied, with her usual charming smile, that she and Gustave de Clainville had been brought up together, and that for worlds she would not give him pain!

I wonder I did not kill her—*or him!*—I killed nothing however but a pair of post-horses, in my haste to reach Calais.—I was in a state of indignation impossible to describe. I fancied that the whole society in which we had been flirting was aware of the hopes I had entertained, and would become aware of the rebuffs I had received.

I might have spared the poor post-horses.—Society recognized in Madame de la Bélinaye a woman, as she was styled by the Duchess,

parfaitement bien élevée et incapable de manquer à ses devoirs—surtout envers son portemanteau.

—The only fault they found with me was my having quitted Paris (on pretence of business) without soliciting an audience of adieu from the King.—For they settled it that I only went because the Carnival was at an end and Carême beginning: and in the time of Charles X., Carême was indeed a season of sackcloth and ashes!—

That I could be so little a man of the world as to resent the prudent conduct of Madame de la Bélinaye, was a charge not to be lightly brought against a man born in the Château de Boulainvilliers, and bred in the Castle of Windsor.

But I had not reached the heart of the mystery. Many a long year afterwards, I discovered from one of the confidentials of the Carlist Court whom I met in exile at Pera, that the anti-climax of my romance was the work of Madame la Comtesse de St. Gratien!

In the interests of *la morale publique*, she had insinuated such scandals into the ear of Madame la Dauphine, as produced a royal sermon to the poor Duchess, and a maternal sermon to poor Clémentine; and even the aid of a conjugal sermon had been ultimately called in, much to the injury of his Majesty Charles the Tenth's contractor for post-horses of Montreuil-sur-Mer.

The gods are just and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to scourge us !

How glad I am that, absorbed by other interests, I stirred not so much as my little finger in behalf of the most unpopular ministry in Europe, or the private satisfaction of the most revengeful woman,—by obtaining an order to ransack the Record Office of the White Tower, for the archives carried off from Vincennes, during the Regency of the Duke of Bedford !

CHAPTER VIII.

Qu' on ne s'attende pas aux matières, mais à la façon que j'y donne: qu'on voye, en ce que j'emprunte, si j'ai sceu choisir de quoy rehaulser mon propos. Je ne compte pas mes emprunts, je les poise. Ils sont tous, ou peut s'en fault, de noms si fameux et si anciens, qu'ils me semblent se nommer assez sans moy.—MONTAIGNE.

I dream'd, 'twas on a birth-day night
A sumptuous palace rose to sight,
The builder had through every part
Observed the chastest rules of art,
Raphael and Titian there display'd
All the full force of light and shade.
Around, the liveried servants wait,
And the First life-guards kept the gate.—COTTON.

THE ancient ballads of Spain, England, and France have put on record instances, too numerous to be included in this advertisement, of the fatal results of long absence between lovers and even married people, when Christian knights used to go and fight in Palestine, and

Christian ladies to remain twirling their spindles at home.—Even then, fidelity was a rare virtue; and from the days of the Crusades till now, little has been done I fear to cultivate its propagation.—

I am not saying this to excuse my own enormities; but I appeal to the fine gentlemen of the day whether the strongest passion recognized at Crockford's be capable of standing out a long day's journey on the rail, with some new fair face immediately opposite,—or a week's tour on the Continent among multitudes of faces less fair than piquant.—It is absurd to think of it!—Constancy is a purely pastoral virtue; and exists for the great world only in gilt edged tomes of select poetry, and Italian canzonets.—

A beautiful landscape excites our fervent admiration. We gaze upon it with enthusiasm till we fancy its outlines indelibly impressed on our memory,—leave it with regret,—and for a time, recall its beauties to mind with delight

and truth.—At the end of a few days, we should be uncommonly puzzled to sketch even a faint resemblance of our favourite scene.—We cannot remember whether the church tower appeared above the wood, or whether the ruins were above or below the bridge. Our recollections become perplexed. We grow angry with ourselves and our picture. We resolve to try again another time. We never *do* try. The whole thing has become a bore. It is better to enjoy the new view before us, than harass our mind with unavailing and bewildering reminiscences.—

Thus is it that most human passions, unless stereotyped by positive engagements, stand the test of absence. I address myself on this occasion, with sentiments truly paternal, to the younger and fairer portion of my readers; for it grieves me to see the dear little souls deluded by themselves and others into confidence in the fidelity of those who go shooting on the moors, or masquing at the Carnival, or yachting in

the Mediterranean ; and who are pretty sure to be forsworn before they attain Calais or Berwick upon Tweed.—In these days of chemical substitutes and general adulteration, there is no such thing in the market as genuine love.—It may be shown about in samples, but the lot will not stand the test of purchase and possession.—Try!—

My Public will perceive what was passing in my mind as I sat pensively down to a Maintenon cutlet, that looked hugely like a shoulder of mutton wrapt in the mainsail of a man of war, at the new and fashionized edition of the Ship Inn, Dover, which now called itself Hotel.—Heartily ashamed of myself, I sought out all the sophistries within reach, to excuse my frailty.—The truth was that my love or esteem for Sophronia Vavasour formed a species of pastoral interlude in my noisy, heartless life ; and the bray of the trumpet of worldliness had drowned the faintly remembered echoes of that still small music.—

The less said and the less thought about it, the better.—I had not pledged myself to return. The court was in London; and unless compelled to visit Windsor, there was no absolute occasion for me to present myself at Sunning Hill.—Such separations without further explanation, are matters of daily occurrence. Miss Vavasour had no more to complain of than hundreds of others.—

From the moment I set foot in London, however, all thought on the subject was banished from my mind.—I found Society in an uproar, as for an O. P. riot.—Such outcries,—such outfallings,—such tattling,—such battling,—such rows,—such vows,—such a coming together by the ears of Gorgons, Hydras, and Chimeras dire!

It was a long time since the plague of party spirit had visited London;—and all the long repressed raging and storming of the Pittite and Foxite factions, were out-stormed and out-raged by the frenzy of the Philo-Catholics and

Anti-Catholics.—There had been two or three duels, there were likely to be a dozen more ; and certain Countesses were calling names and pulling caps in the gallery of the House, in a style that recalled to mind the viragos in the tribunes of the National Assembly.

It is indispensable I suppose that every great political crisis should afford an outlet for the escape of human folly ; as the hurricane that stirs up the majesty of the waves produces also a superabundance of froth and foam.—But it strikes me that there are quite men enough in the world to talk the nonsense required, without calling in the aid of those so much better occupied in threading beads and wearing them afterwards. Oh ! those women of what are called masculine understandings !—Give me to listen to an orchestra of kettle drums, or a symphony of corntes à pistons, or a Chinese Tom-Tom-ing of the Evil spirits, rather than the sounding brass and tinkling cymbals of their empty argumentations :—whereof, as Cicero says,—

harum sententiarum quæ vera sit, deus aliquis viderit!

The whole frame of the beau monde was broken up.—No more large parties!—The solution of the Catholic Question served at least to relieve society from the curse of crammed assemblies, for half the world no longer chose to meet the other half.—The consequence was that people who wanted to distinguish themselves by partizanship, set up in their houses *des bureaux de politique*, somewhat resembling the *bureaux d'esprit* of Paris in the olden time.—It was a pretext for selection,—a new order of exclusivism;—and among those who rose cent per cent by their promptitude on the occasion, was Mrs. Brettingham; who not only turned to account the vote of her husband, but became the centre of a circle, by giving incessant dinners to the more industrious cultivators of the graft of Liberalism which had budded out of the decayed old trunk of Tory Intolerance.—

Never having visited the land of tabinets and Orange lodges, I was not prepared for the

hubbub creatable by a sufficient vociferation of the words “Protestant succession,” and “Catholic disabilities;”—and I confess my own prejudices were so far enlisted under the old banner, that I was glad to escape hearing the speech of Danby, which his party pronounced so fine a one, (and which will probably be included in the 150th edition of Enfield’s Speaker published in the year 1941,) setting forth his progressive change of opinions on this strife-stirring question. Howbeit, my brother was not one of those who committed himself by recanting in February his profession of faith of the July preceding,—for *his* enlightenment on the subject was the growth of years,—I should not have cared to witness any variation of principle in one who to *me* appeared oracular as the Gods.—

It was supposed, (one always says it was *supposed* when afraid of being called to account for one’s sayings,) that the arguments of Danby were not without effect in converting, during

the recess, those two great pillars of Protestantism who had found that the only means of keeping the fabric still aloft, was by the admission of their insufficiency and the extension of their bases.—My brother's rejection of place, and superiority to party influence or press reputation, imparted the utmost force to his opinions : and the Commanders in Chief saw that if *he* had given up the dilapidated old fortress as untenable, it was time to evacuate.—

I had no reason to infer from any boast of his own that his influence had effected these marvels. But I could entertain little doubt of it after listening for half an hour to the patient eloquence with which, in our own family party, he attempted to mollify the obstinacy of Lord Ormington —His lordship was a most mulish Anti-Catholic ;—his lordship was an Irish tithe owner, and English boroughholder ; and his lordship rightly conjectured that the light of day once admitted into the old lumber-room of parliamentary prejudices, a general clearance

must ensue,—the cobwebs be swept out,—the reptiles ejected.—

He consequently refused to hear the voice of the charmer, long after the other deaf adders had opened their ears; and to me it was a spectacle almost affecting, to see the forbearing and respectful patience with which Danby listened to the platitudes of that foolish fond old man, ere he attempted to make himself heard in his turn.—Even when the attempt *was* made, it was so tenderly and deprecatingly effected, that a mother soothing the impatience of a fretful child could not have evinced greater consideration.--

He did not try to cajole the old man out of his opinions. His arguments were as manfully arrayed as they were softly spoken;—like Lear's soldiers, they were shod with felt. But how potent were their arms!—

This was indeed the filial piety of the stork, bearing the superannuated parent aloft on his powerful pinion. Submissive to Lord Orming-

ton's starts of temper, heedless of his taunts, long-suffering with his arrant incomprehensiveness,—Danby renewed, and recapitulated, and re-arranged his arguments, till, like a stupid child over its primer, by mere force of iteration, Lord Ormington was made to understand that though c, a, t, might spell cat, when people found it necessary to spell dog, they must look about them for other letters.—

I could perceive by the expression of Danby's eye, the heartfelt delight with which he at length discovered that his eloquence was triumphant. It would have been a severe mortification to him to find the vote of his father recorded against a measure, to which he had lent the support of his voice.

Another person besides myself was often present at these family discussions, whose countenance was scarcely a less interesting study than that of my brother,—his pupil, Jane. Without presuming to open her lips upon a subject of so grave a nature, it was plain to

perceive from her variations of complexion, how thoroughly the young girl entered into all that was going on.—To *her*, her father's voice was as a divine manifestation ; and she drank in its sounds, as the sands of the East imbibe a shower,—rendering back instantaneous verdure.—No need of argument to convince Jane. My brother's decree was her law. *She* listened to his flowing eloquence as to a strain of solemn music, and, recognizing the being of a brighter sphere, wondered how the obduracy of the incredulous apostle could so long hold out!—

Danby did not seem even to wonder. Nothing was perceptible in *his* deportment save earnest desire for the conversion of his expected proselyte.—Only once did I see him out of temper, on the occasion,—and that was with myself.—Irritated by the obtuseness of the old man, I allowed myself to exclaim in a tone of irritation—“ Good God ! my lord—surely you must have sense enough to perceive that ——”

I forget what ;—but I do not forget the look of dignity with which my brother turned towards me.—I had not seen him assume such an air since, nearly twenty years before, he had surveyed me from the hearth rug of Lady Ormington's drawing-room, on the day of our dining together at Votefilch's froggerly.—

It was plain to perceive, at that moment, which of us stood in the presence of his father : a singular exemplification of the Judgment of the wisest of kings !—

Thanks to his gentle prudence, meanwhile, my brother succeeded.—

Ut hymettia sole

*Cera remollescit, tractataque pollice multas,
Vertitur in facies, ipsoque fit utilis usu,—*

the old gentleman voted in the end after his son's own heart.

There was a person meanwhile,—or rather a personage, who, I suspect, was almost as grievously tormented by the political exigencies of the time, as my Lord Ormington ; a per-

sonage who, though, *like* Lord Ormington, he ceded to the force of circumstances, ceded not without bitter reluctance :—the King !—George IV. had embraced Toryism as a man in terror of the violence of the waves, embraces the spar to which he entrusts his life,—with a sort of spasmodic clutch.—To relinquish his hold by even a single finger, was a sacrifice ;—more especially considering the John Knoxiades to which he was subjected by having to appear in public, like King Henry in Shakspeare's play, between two reverend divines.—His constitution was already deeply shaken.—He was ill. He was nervous. His defeats were beginning.—Like Louis XIV. in the decline of his years and fortunes, he began to fear that Providence was ungrateful for his support !*—

I was really sorry for him.—Between infirmity of body and tenderness of conscience,

* Louis le Grand is said to have exclaimed on hearing of one of the victories of the Allies,—“ *Dieu a donc oublié tout ce que j'ai fait pour lui ?* ”

which are perhaps more closely correspondent than one cares to allow, the King was sorely ill at ease.—We kept Easter at Windsor; and scarcely had I travelled a mile upon the Hounslow road, when my conscience became almost as fidgetty as if I too had taken a coronation oath, and been subjected to the exhortations of my royal chaplain!—

So accustomed had I been, a few months before, to regard every milestone upon that road as an obstacle dividing me from Sophronia and happiness, that the one marked

FROM HYDE PARK CORNER I MILE.

seemed to stand forth upon the highway and reprove me, like a second Nathan.

Villain that I was!—what a traitor had I been to all that was good and fair, since last I paid toll at the Kensington turnpike!—I swear I blushed to think of myself. I had so com-

pletely razed poor Silwood and all its associations from the tablets of my brain for the last two months, that there now rushed upon me, as if after the lapse of years, a torrent of overwhelming reminiscences.—I began to wonder how I had ever found courage to break the ties of such a connexion.—All the claims of Miss Vavasour began to reconcentrate themselves into a shape terribly palpable.—I had been her all but declared lover ; yet a few days' inevitable absence, had tempted me to an absence of months at my own good liking.—I had acted at the instigation of a caprice,—caring little whose happiness might suffer, so my own pleasure were secure!—

It was a balmy April day,—a wondrous restorative to the human frame and to the animal spirits it exhales,—which some call the soul and some the heart, to the great confusion of metaphysics.

Green leaflets were emerging from the little brown shells which form the first curious vegetation of spring ; and green feelings began to

peep out of my own somewhat hardened nature.—By the time we reached the turn after leaving Egham, where I had been often in the habit of diverging from the Windsor road towards Sunning Hill, I grew very spoony indeed;—and had not the carriage on whose cushions of yellow silk I was reposing, borne on its panel a royal crown, methinks I should have cut off at once to the feet of my Nea; pleaded guilty to all of which she might see fit to accuse me, and implored permission to reinstate myself in the position I had abandoned.

The spot where this sudden perception of my unworthiness rushed into my mind, was precisely the place where, three months before, I had been so oppressed by evil omens touching the illness of my poor mother. There were no howling winds now,—no pitiless sleety showers; yet I swear that the weather, sunshiny as it was, appeared fifty times more cheerless.—To *me*, no season of the year is so disagreeable as the moment when a glaring spring sunshine makes

one pant after the shade and refreshment of verdure, while the branches are still as naked as an Irish beggar.—The turf which has not yet resumed its healthy smoothness, is fresh in one place and withered in another, like the cheeks of a lady of a certain age.—Even the violets breathing from every hedge, seem a sort of premature and misplaced concession.—The eglantine and honeysuckle vouchsafe their gentle odours only when there are gentle hands astir to pluck them from their obscurity ; while those rash harbingers of spring—but I am getting Shenstonian!—I humbly ask pardon;—for though I fancied myself in love just then, I am under no such illusion now.—

On arriving at the Castle, I was beset by duties of office which fortunately occupied my attention so much as to give my conscience a respite.—It was not till a late hour the following afternoon, when all the phaeton work was past and over, and the sun gone in, and the weather getting chilly, that I managed to make

my way across the park to Sunning Hill.—Saladin pricked up his ears as he took the well-known road.—I am afraid he was far less a brute of the two!—

I had gone a slapping pace till I reached the gates of Silwood Park, on the confines of which domain the cottage was situated. But no sooner did I attain the belt of scraggy firs, marking where the last enclosure had subtracted the waste lands of Bagshot from heath and honey-bee, than I drew in my rein.—I was beginning to feel uncomfortable,—to settle my collar,—blow my nose,—clear my throat, and perform all the little manœuvres of a gentleman embarrassed in his feelings. It was many years since Cecil Danby had been so thoroughly discountenanced.

One of the peculiar graces of Annie and Sophronia, in my estimation, was the delicate niceness of their habits of life,—a niceness wholly apart from finery or affectation. Every thing about them was in its place,—every thing

appropriate,—every thing lady-like : and the cottage, albeit really a cottage, might, from its orderliness of array, have formed a beautiful rustic ornament for a table in one of the state rooms of Windsor Castle.

The first thing that struck me as I now approached it from the brow of the hill commanding a view of the garden, was a spread of clothes drying upon the grass !—That lawn where I had so often looked unutterable things into the eyes of Sophronia, now looked unmentionables at me !—As I live by bread, nankin shorts and Bandana handkerchiefs seemed to have grown like mushrooms out of the soil.

“These men are come, then !”—thought I.—
“Beasts that they must be, to have introduced such habits into the family.”

I had half a mind to hurry away from the little Eden thus vilely desecrated : but Saladin seemed determined to push on.

“Are the ladies at home ?” said I to a frightened maid in curl-papers, who, after

much ringing, opened the gate;—and on her giving a sort of shuffle and murmur in the affirmative, I followed her into the house.

The dining-room, which formed a sort of vestibule to the large drawing-room,—smelt fearfully of beer and cheese, as I passed through it; and lo! on the chintz sofa, whereon I had so often rested side by side with my charming friends, was seated a rotund gentleman in gaiters, who stared at me through his spectacles till my heart quailed within me; Mr. Vavasour, of course,—the first fat or rubicund West Indian I had ever seen.

“ You’re a sharp hand at a bell-wire, young man!—What’s your business?” said he—without rising, as brutally as if addressing a tax-gatherer.

“ I have done myself the honour of calling, Sir, to enquire after the health of your daughters,” I replied, calling up my utmost graces of person and manner, to reprove this insolent familiarity.

“I’ll just trouble *you*, Sir, to take yourself out of this, and not be putting off your sauce upon *me*!”—cried my host, half rising, and letting fall a violent thump upon the table before him, whereon the sketch-books of Sophronia had been used to lie, and where now steamed in their place a tumbler of mahogany-coloured brandy and water.

Imperturbable in ordinary emergencies, I own I stood aghast!—A sworn enemy however to attempts after scenic effect in simple narratives like the present, I shall content myself with concluding that my Public has been more sagacious than myself, in divining that the gentleman of nankins and strong Cheshire was *not* my future father-in-law;—though I can scarcely hope that its clairvoyance will extend to the discovery that the Greysdales had given up the cottage, three weeks before; and that the landlord, a retired grocer of Staines, was enjoying himself in his Tusculum for the remainder of their term, while waiting a summer tenant.

To such a man, when a few more insolences had elicited these explanations, I judged it better to announce myself specifically; and the hereditary and official honours of a Cecil Danby had more than the effect I anticipated in reducing the savage to a state of pacification.—I verily believe he would have ended by offering me a tumbler similar to his own, had I not stopped short his civilities by an interrogatory concerning his recent tenants.

He had little to relate; but that little was not disadvantageous.—“Mr. Vavasour was a thick-and-through gentleman; — had booked up forty pounds for breakage, without so much as looking over the inventory; and it would be a great pleasure to *him* to get such another tenant if so be as I knowed of any one with an eye to the premises.—He *had* hoped to keep the Westingens on through the summer. But the young lady had been so much worse since her father’s arrival, that they left at last at a minute’s notice.”

I began to tremble. The departure of the family and my bitter disappointment, so strangely brought to my mind the sudden departure of poor Emily that—

“Miss Vavasour was not *seriously* indisposed, I hope?”—faltering I, determined to know the worst.

“*Miss?*—Why, bless your heart, ’twere the married sister as was nigh going off the perch,” replied my facetious acquaintance. “I am afraid there was some kind of little unpleasantness betwixt her and her good gentleman,—as is oftentimes the case where married folks has been living apart.—Between friends, Sir, a terrible scuffle afore getting off!—However, it doesn’t become *me* to talk, to whom the family behaved so handsome; and so, Sir, you’ll please to excuse me.”

I tried again—but it would not do. When I attempted to worm further particulars out of him, he renewed *his* endeavours to make a house-agent of me;—and I was forced to retreat.

As I went out, the frightened maid, divested of her curl-papers, was making the agreeable to Saladin over the garden palings, to which I had tied him;—and never shall I forget the snuff of indignation with which he received her advances!—It was a sunless April evening; and on mounting him, I buttoned up my coat to my chin, with an indescribable sense of ill-usage. I was almost determined to take cold, to revenge myself upon these people.

What did they mean by this abrupt departure?—It seemed almost a fatality that I could never fall in love in a regular way!—With all the young ladyships regularly entered for matrimony in the peerage,—with all the stationary Misses to be found in Grosvenor square and its environs,—I seemed destined to be perpetually mocked by accouplement with fleeting and unsubstantial things!

Hard matter was it that day to listen to a great deal about nothing that interested me,

and say nothing about a great deal that interested me, which forms a chief duty of courtiership.—However I got through the evening,—I got through the night,—I got through the morrow; and while seeming to sympathize in the rejoicings of all about me at having got rid for a time of London and its political dissensions, I felt impatient as a child of the isolation of that gorgeous retreat,—that stately mockery,—that wilderness of marble and gilding, set up in the midst of the fields, as if to render its tawdry glare more contemptible by contrast with the majesty of nature.—

To own the truth, I was a little out of sorts with England as well as with Silwood cottage, Windsor Castle, and myself.—The Tuileries and Louvre had not tended to enhance the dignities of English Nationality.—Everything seemed diminished to a meaner scale.—The proportions of our domestic architecture appeared vilely contracted, the furniture mismatched, the colours inharmonious, the gold

lustreless, the very light of day saddened by the overclouded humidity of atmosphere.

And then the human groups,—how ponderously in accordance with the overloaded heaviness of a scene, fine rather than rich,—solemn rather than dignified!—No play of spirits,—nothing exciting to the mind or cordial to the heart!—How I missed the playful *finesse* of the society of Clémentine. How I longed for the dash of that aërial car of pleasure, without drag or drawback;—secure from collision on a road where all are proceeding towards the same object and at the same pace!—At Paris, I should not have had to surrender myself to the dumps, because I had quarrelled with Cecil Danby!—

Next day, I contrived to obtain a royal commission for town; not as my co-mates were in the habit of contriving it, because I wanted a pretext for an hour at White's to brighten up my small talk for the royal dinner table. My object was to seek out at Egham,

the medical man who had attended Mrs. Greysdale, and obtain, if possible, some insight into the movements of the family.—The said Dr. L. was a pet aversion of mine, as a man I had never been able to keep at a proper distance. He was one of those who presume upon the sort of favour that attends the assuager of torment in the house of sickness; and I have heard him jest with Sophronia in a tone of familiarity that tempted me to set my foot upon him. Nay he once patted *me* patronizingly on the back, in approval of some opinion I was expressing to Mrs. Greysdale when he entered the room in the discharge of his daily, pulse-feeling, pill-driving errand.

No surer feeler of a man's time of life, by the way, than his estimate of physicians. While young and vigorous, and what Blair defines as "complexionally-pleasant men of health," we despise them as cobblers of the human frame, and pity the patients whom they cobble;—nor, till our own stitches begin to drop, do we

learn to respect the awl that is to reunite our soles with our bodies ; and admit that, for want of them

Millions have died of medicable wounds.

Now that gout and dyspepsia have screwed me in their vices, or rather, now that my vices have screwed me into gout and dyspepsia, instead of wondering that a country doctor should have presumed to slap a satellite of majesty on the shoulder, I wonder only how any man so professionally cognizant of the levelling infirmities of human nature,—a man in whose note-book the pitiful accidents of royal, gentle, and simple pathology are written down,—can find it in his powers of gravity ever to become a respecter of persons. A fantastical French writer, one of those cracked fellows through the fissures of whose brain strange lights have penetrated, observes that lawyers, doctors, and confessors, beholding human nature in all its naked truth, are widowed of all illusions ; which is the reason

custom has assigned them a perpetual suit of solemn black, by way of permanent mourning for the better half of existence.—

I reached Egham; and Dr. L—— received me at his dinner table,—apologizing for the liberty—but he could only snatch half an hour out of his day's work for rest and refreshment; and guessed, perhaps, that my visit was professional.—I was rather indignant to find him take me so easy,—more particularly as I thought I discerned a sneer upon his lip when I began to enquire after Mrs. Greysdale.—His answers were short, dry, and unsatisfactory as an autumnal cough.—“The family was gone—sailed for the West Indies he concluded,—he was sorry to be unable to afford me the intelligence I desired.”

I saw that he pointedly avoided meeting my eye, while vouchsafing even this scanty information; and, rendered more anxious than ever by his reserve, persevered.—Not a word, however, of Sophronia!—I asked only after the

health of Mrs. Greysdale, and so pertinaciously, that, at length, being in a hurry and near the end of his apple pasty, he spoke out.—

“I have already told you, Sir, that Mrs. Greysdale quitted this neighbourhood in a very precarious state,” said he; “and you are placing me in a disagreeable situation, look ye, by this sort of under-hand application.”

I began to protest and look fierce; but being in his own dining-room, the plain-spoken man had the best of it.—

“Excuse my straightfor’ardness, Mr. Danby,” said he;—“but betwixt ourselves, you have done mischief enough in the family, and it seems to me that the less you meddle or make further in their affairs, the better.”

“Mischief?” I exclaimed.—“You are under some strange delusion. I can assure you, Dr. L., that, up to the moment of leaving England, I was received on the most friendly footing by Mrs. Greysdale.”

“Ay, ay, ay!”—interrupted the Doctor,

helping himself to a clean plate from the dumb waiter, like a man to whom moments are precious ;—" the old story—the old story !—too friendly by half it seems.—However, all's well that ends well. You are too fine a gentleman to be a novice in such matters. You contrived to get off to France before the husband and father arrived ; and to keep out of the way so long as they remained in England.—You escaped a broken head : and if that poor gentle patient of mine should escape a broken heart—"

"What in the name of heaven are you talking about ?"—said I, in utter surprise.—

"About what is so little my business, my good Sir," was his cool reply—"that unless you had pestered me with questions, look ye, I should not have annoyed you by my observations."—

And the Doctor pursed up his mouth as closely as if I had proposed administering to him one of his own doses.—I was afraid that, like Timon, or Zanga, he had resolved to hold his tongue for the remainder of his days.—

“My dear Doctor,” said I, hoping to soften him,—“believe me, you are talking riddles to me. I am not aware of ever having inflicted a moment’s pain on Mrs. Greysdale.”—

Dr. L. uttered an impatient grunt.—“Unless, indeed, she felt annoyed by my having quitted England without so express a declaration of attachment to Sophronia—to Miss Vavasour,—as might justify me from the charge of trifling with her affections.”

“Miss Vavasour!”—muttered the Doctor, shrugging his shoulders.—

“But my fortunes are precarious,” I resumed,—not choosing to notice his discourteous interruptions,—“and I judged it more honourable to wait the arrival of her father before ——”

“Come, come, come!”—said the Doctor, almost angrily.—“What need of all this rigmale to me?—you are not accountable to me, look ye, for your conduct in the family. Spare yourself the trouble and shame of disin-

genuousness, Mr. Danby,—for I have neither inclination or leisure to prescribe for my neighbours' affairs. From all I saw and knew of Mrs. Greysdale, I have reason to believe that the intemperance of a jealous temper decided too severely upon her conduct; and that even so far as you *did* succeed in estranging her affections from her husband, was effected by a prodigious exercise of those powers of seduction which — But I must wish you good evening, Sir," cried he, interrupting himself by a sudden glance at his watch,—“I have an appointment, look ye, at Shrub's Hill, for seven o'clock.”—

“For the love of mercy, Dr. L.”—cried I, —almost distracted,—“do not leave me in this state of uncertainty. Ten minutes' conversation,—just to satisfy me that —”

“Ten minutes' delay, Sir, would worry the nervous patient who is expecting me, into a high fever.—At a more convenient season I shall be happy to enter further into your case; and —”

A servant now entered to announce his gig. Without respect for my august presence, the Doctor began to button on his driving coat.—

“If you would be good enough to get into my carriage and allow me to take you as far as Shrub’s Hill?” cried I, in despair,—“we might discuss the business on our way!”—

“I should be happy to oblige you,” he replied,—(holding open the dining-room door, a plain gesticulation of “not a word more, but get out!”)—“but I am so accustomed to my drive in the open air after dinner, that your close carriage would give me a splitting headache.”—

“Will you then permit me,” said I, in utter desperation, “to accompany *you*?”—

“But my servant, my dear Sir,—my servant!—*Who* would have a care of my horse and gig while I visit my patients?—I have nine visits, look ye, to pay before I get home again; and ——”

“He might easily get into the rumble of my

carriage, which shall follow us,"—said I, beseechingly,—“and resume his place when our conversation is at an end.”

And I suppose there was unusual earnestness depicted in my looks and manner;—for after stopping short on his own door steps and surveying me from head to foot, the Doctor gave a sudden jerk of the head, and altered his “get out!” to “get in!”—“We may discuss the whole history in a couple of miles,” said he, as I obeyed his word of command; “as well now, perhaps, as another time.”

Now that I reconsider the matter, I wish I had noticed the air of my attendant,—for I was travelling in one of the royal carriages,—on finding the Doctor’s nondescript in an oil-skin hat and cape, insinuate his leathern gaiters into the rumble beside the varnished boots adorning his own civilized extremities.—As to *me*, all Cecil Danby as I was, never did I feel more grateful than for the concession that entitled me to take my place on the greasy

ushions of a shandrydan, worthy to have graced the travels of an Welch curate of the last century, or Dr. Syntax in his Tour in search of the Picturesque.

“ Well, Sir,”—said the Doctor, as soon as we had rattled off the stones, (the easy chariot gliding noiselessly as a shadow behind us)—as if waiting impatiently for the interrogations which had encumbered him with so adhesive a visitor.

“ I was in hopes you would be good enough to explain to me, Sir,” said I somewhat embarrassed, “ what had given rise to your supposition that Mr. Greysdale entertained any unpleasant impression of the object of my attentions to his wife ?”

“ You had better ask me to explain what gave rise to the general idea of the neighbours, and servants, and other tittle-tattlers of a place, which, abounding like all court neighbourhoods in cottages of gentility, is especially addicted to tittle-tattle,” said the Doctor, dwelling em-

phatically upon every word, “ that you were taking unfair advantage of Mrs. Greysdale’s unprotected situation.”

“ Confound them all, individually and collectively, for a pack of the most officious blockheads that ever invented a tale of scandal !”—cried I, losing all patience in my turn.

“ Hey day—hey day !—you are breaking bounds with a vengeance !” cried the Doctor—“ There wanted only such a burst of fury to convince me that you know yourself to be in the wrong ! — As to resenting that people should notice the pertinacity with which so fine a gentleman condescended to sink into eclipse three mornings per week, in an obscure humdrum retreat like Silwood Cottage, you might as well be angry with *me* at this moment, look ye, for perceiving that nothing short of a love affair would induce you to put up with poor Peggy’s paces and the company of a country apot’ecary, in order to get at news of his pretty patient.”

“ You are a plain spoken and fair dealing man, Dr. L.,” cried I, with sudden resolution ; “ and plain speaking and fair dealing will consequently go further with you than all the fine protestations I could devise. I *am* making a sacrifice to obtain information interesting to my feelings ; and earnestly hope you will not withhold it.—But I swear to you as a gentleman,—do not smile—*not* as a *fine* gentleman, but as an honest man,—that Mrs. Greysdale never for a second interested my feelings otherwise than as a gentle pleasing woman, sister to the object of my affections.”—

“ Honour bright ?”—cried the Doctor, evidently much surprised ; “ then upon my life, I’m both glad and sorry to hear it ! But if you have nothing to reproach yourself with, that poor soul has been shamefully used. Greysdale, it seems, is a peppery fellow.—On finding that a man of your age and condition had been spending hours a day in his house, he naturally made inquiries. I believe I may congratulate

you, Mr. Danby, on a charming reputation.—You are supposed, look ye, to be one of the most accomplished *roués* about town.”

“ Which might be resented by old Vavasour, to whose daughter I had been paying attention, but was clearly no affair of Mr. Greysdale’s,” said I.

“ Pho, pho, pho!—Old Vavasour, as you call him, had only to interrogate the young lady, to know that you had made no proposals of marriage to her,—that your attentions to *her* had been no greater than to her sister; and the mere fact of your making off, just as the husband was expected, explained all.—You can’t deny it, Sir; you can’t deny it.—You were always there,—I met you there a dozen times or so, myself.”

“ And were it a dozen dozen,” said I, in a rage,—“ how are you or how is any one to prove that I am speaking falsely, in my asseveration that my visits were addressed solely and exclusively to the unmarried sister?”—

“Then why the deuce didn’t you explain your intentions?”—

Again I condescended to expound my scruples of conscience : to which the Doctor responded by a most provoking laugh.—

“All I can say in reply is,” said he, checking himself at last, “that it is a thousand pities so conscientious a young gentleman should not enjoy the full benefit of his virtues, in the estimation of the world.—Mrs. Greysdale’s servants thought the worst of you ; — and, either bribed or threatened by her husband, owned it. I was sent for, late one night. The poor creature had ruptured a blood-vessel. Her husband was gone off to town in search of *you*,—her father and sister were weeping over her :—and”—

“But surely,” said I, profoundly indignant —“surely Miss Vavasour came forward with an avowal of my attachment to *her* ?”—

“Greysdale felt that most sisters would have avowed as much, in such an emergency, what-

ever might be the state of the case. A few plain questions settled his opinion. Are you going to be married to that fellow, Soph?—said he.—No.—Are you engaged to him?—No!—Did he ever propose marriage to you? No!—Then it is clear he was making a blind of *you*, a fool of your sister, and a wretch of *me*!”

“But you do not mean to say that on such inconclusive grounds, the brute presumed to ill-use his poor, innocent, infirm wife?” cried I, with bitter indignation.

“Considering how little you profess to care for his poor, innocent, infirm wife, my dear Sir, you are tolerably zealous in her behalf!”—said the Doctor, with a sneer.—

“I do not affect to be savage,” replied I. “The idea of *any* woman being exposed to injury on my account, would excite me as warmly.”

“I do not mean to tell you that he threshed her, (if that be what you understand by ill-usage.) But some women are as tender in their feelings, as others in their frames; and

that dear soft-hearted soul sank under the harsh language and cruel imputations of her husband! I had a hard matter, I can promise you, to get her round.—The first moment she was able to move, Greysdale made it a *sine qua non* of their reconciliation, that she should undertake never to see you again,—that she should instantly quit the neighbourhood of Windsor,—nay! that she should prepare to sail for Jamaica by the first packet.”—

“And they are literally gone,—and I have no means of vindicating myself and her!” cried I, leaning back in the detestable old gig—overcome by my feelings.—

“Unless your niceness of conscience should determine you to undertake a sea-voyage and follow them!” chuckled the Doctor, who, I could see, had very little faith in my protestations. “If you really want to marry Miss Vavasour, you can’t do better! Even if you only want to secure a pretty young woman from getting her head or heart broken for your sake,

it would be no great sacrifice to marry Miss Sophronia :—for her father told me himself he would down with fifty thousand pounds on the nail, to any suitable husband !—And now Mr. Danby, I must trouble you to change places with John ; for yonder green gate, look ye, is the end of my journey.—And so I wish you a very good evening.”

I suppose it would have been hardly worth one’s while to dirty one’s fingers by killing an apothecary !—

CHAPTER IX.

A l'imitation de Fontenelle, il économisait le mouvement vital, et concentrait tous les sentimens humains dans le moi. Aussi sa vie s'écoulait elle sans faire plus de bruit que le sable d'une horloge antique. Quelquefois ses victimes criaient beaucoup,—s'emportaient;—puis, il se faisait chez lui un grand silence, comme dans une cuisine où l'on égorge un canard.—BALZAC.

I APPEAL to the sympathies of every gentleman even moderately versed in the pains and penalties of a lady-killer's career, where

Vegnan li vaghi Amori
Senza fiammelle ò strali
Scherzando insieme pargóletti e nudi,

whether he ever heard of a fellow more unlucky in such matters than myself!—

I admit that in my more sunny springtide of Cecilian gallantry, as the Anacreon of Téos

and Anacreon of Ireland have united to phrase it,—

I had a pulse for every dart
That love could scatter from his quiver,
While every woman found in me a heart
Which I with all my heart and soul did give her.

Mais je valais mieux que ma réputation ;—and though I frankly admit that, at the triumph of Catholic emancipation, my heart like the British Empire was divided into three kingdoms,—that of Sophronia in the country,—Mariana in town, and Clémentine in Paris,—to say nothing of an unmentionable plurality of colonies,—I was utterly incapable of the heinousness of entertaining views upon two sisters at once.—Mrs. Greysdale never presented herself to my wildest imagination in other than the most sacred point of view!—

I had respected her as she deserved,—with what result the Public has been apprised.—And yet the copy book morality of this specious world of plausibilities persists in asserting that “Virtue is its own reward!”—

For the facts jolted out of the blunt lips of Dr. L——, by the rough pace of Peggy and rough questioning of his companion, were strictly correct. The family were gone,—were by this time half-way to Jamaica ;—rendered miserable for life by that reckless spirit of trifling with other people's happiness, which seemed fated to characterize my proceedings through life !—

As to following them, according to the cool suggestion of the man of gallipots, I would not have undertaken such a sea-voyage to discover another New World, or lose sight of the Old one,—I scarcely know which were the stronger temptation !—But I wrote,—I wrote a long and eloquent epistle,—nay, *two* long and eloquent epistles ; — one addressed to the husband, the other to the father,—enclosing each a billet, neither long nor eloquent—but I flattered myself much to the purpose, entreating forgiveness of Annie and the hand of Sophronia, in terms expressive of the utmost penitence and passion.—I very much doubt

whether the Right Honourable Secretary of State for the Colonies, ever affixed his official frank to a packet containing so vast a quantity of inflammatory matter.—

All I hoped was that Greysdale might take my Epistle for Gospel. Meanwhile, as two months at least must elapse ere I obtained an answer, it was unnecessary to harass my feelings by continually dwelling on a subject so painful.—Confiding in the justice of Providence to enlighten Greysdale to his wife's merits and Sophronia to mine, I occupied myself with my official duties ; and in the little family circle in Connaught Place, found occasion for the cultivation of those domestic virtues of which I might shortly stand in need.

As poor people provide themselves with tea-cups and bedsteads, by gradual provision, from the time they have matrimony in view, I thought it advisable to accustom myself to roast mutton and domestic table talk.

My brother seemed as anxious as myself that

our circle should be re-united. It did not then occur to me, when I saw him so much more punctual than during Lady Ormington's lifetime, in his visits to Hanover Square, and so much more eager in his invitations to Lord Ormington to Connaught Place, that he had any fear of a mother-in-law; for the idea of Lord Ormington's marrying again was to *me* too preposterous to be entertained.

But Danby, aware that the world is made up of absurdities, was really anxious; for it appeared that Lady Harriet Vandeleur, on pretence of long friendship for the deceased, was besetting the widowerhood of his father much as she had beset his own; only that instead of attacking the old lord with treatises on education, and yearnings after the matronly duties of a chaperon, she besieged him with pamphlets on the Catholic Question, and little three-cornered notes containing specifics for the rheumatism,—to say nothing of cadeaux of Angora flannel, and bottles of cajuput oil,

and divers other delicate attentions adapted to a Corydon of three-score and twelve.—

It was not, I am sure, that Danby entertained any interested impatience of a dowager on the estate; and had Lord Ormington chosen to choose wisely, would probably have advised him to comfort his declining years by the companionship of a suitable Abishag. But Lady Harriet who, after a *couleur de rose* flirtation with *me* had tried to get up a blue one with *him*, and was now attempting a quaker-coloured one with the head of the family;—Lady Harriet, who would allow him to call neither soul nor body his own;—Lady Harriet, who would quack him to death and elsewhere by her mountebankerries, moral, physical, and medical;—Lady Harriet, always in a fuss herself or the cause of fusses in others;—Lady Harriet, who chose to chop the chaff of life with a forty horse power engine,—and go sparrow-shooting with Perkins's steam gun,—Lady Harriet was not to be borne. Danby was quite right to

dine with Lord Ormington, or invite him to dinner, three days in the week. There would not have been three months' life in the poor old gentleman after the honeymoon of such a waspish marriage.—

Danby was careful to assemble at his table the old man's contemporaries for his recreation; and in this, I think, he was wrong.—It was very well for Alexander Pope to cling to the society of Martha Blount, because "his life was written in her mind," and vice versâ; or for Montaigne to say of Boëthius, "*je l'aimai parceque c'était lui—il m'aimait parceque c'était moi.*" But that which is good in love and friendship, is decidedly bad in acquaintanceship;—and all that came of Lord Votefilch, Lord Ormington, and Lord Falkirk meeting together to talk over old times was, that each said of the other in private after dinner, to any third person to whose button he could harpoon himself,—“Poor Ormington! 'Tis a melancholy thing to see him so broken!”

—or “Poor Falkirk ! you will scarcely believe it, but I remember him a remarkably intelligent man !”—or “Poor Votefilch ! how strange it is he should remember the most trivial thing that ever befell him, yet not recollect how many thousand times he has told one the same story !”—Each saw that the other was beginning to twaddle.—

Sometimes, indeed, after a particularly good bottle of claret, the three old souls would grow jocular,—recur to old times,—talk of the chimes at midnight,—and poke each other in the ribs à propos to Grassini or Mara, just as Sir Moulton Drewe, Lord Mereworth and I, were doing t’other night à propos to Fodor.—

But the truth was that poor Votefilch *was* getting rather the worse for wear and tear ;—or at least, *his* style of boring was *more* boring than that of the other two.—He had always the pretension of being a wiseacre, and seeing further than his neighbours ; and when a man who wears the pretentious beard of a Sage

begins to drivel, the spectacle is disagreeable.—

Poor old Votefilch had been ruined by too good an education, and college honours.— Learning had been beaten into his head so very hard, that his head was as hard as a stone. It had taken at eighteen the shape it was to wear for life. His degree was a final measure.—Thenceforward, nothing was to be learned,—nothing *unlearned* ; and he judged mankind at seventy, after wearing for years the mighty spectacles of office, just as he had judged them (after the most approved classical authorities) at Eton. There are various ways of being a pedant,—his was the most pernicious kind ; for the man who has always a quotation from the ancients on his lips, expends his pedantry on others ; whereas the man whose every idea is Patavinian, the whole form and pressure of his mind being shaped from the dead languages, inflicts his pedantry on himself.—Poor old Votefilch ! He never could allow himself

to laugh at Mercutio or Falstaff, for thinking of Aristophanes or Terence.—

And now that this Temple of the Muses was cracking and giving way, the effect was ludicrous. He talked politics in the vein of Justice Shallow, and literature in that of Holophernes; snuffled about the destinies of Europe, and pomposed about invariable principles.— Yet in spite of Votefilch's senility, his name was one of the props of the Tory party. He was brought out on field days, as one of their great guns; though they knew his condition to be such that, in case of a discharge, the cannoneers must be blown to atoms.

I must say *that* for the Tories,—they *did* make it a point of conscience to support their aged and infirm. *Their* Anchises was not left to be roasted alive.—They were pious sons to a superannuated father. The Whigs are very gentlemanly gentlemen; but one never saw *them* play the stork with their political grand-papas.

I should not have taken much heed of Vote-filch's prosing,—though I confess that the decadence of a manly mind has a much more powerful effect upon *my* sympathies than the decay of a fair face,—but that he *would* pounce upon me as his victim.—The King knew better than to admit so decided a bore within miles of his august person; and could he have helped it, would never have had Voltefilch nearer to Windsor than Staines.—But presuming upon having lorded it, that is secretary-of-stated it, over my youthful inexperience, he felt privileged to make me his speaking trumpet of communication with the royal ear.

“If you would take an opportunity, my dear Cecil, of impressing upon His Majesty's mind, that,”—or “if you would seize some auspicious moment, my dear Danby, for making it clear to the King, that”—was sure to prelude some wrong-headed theory of his devising.—I, to be impressing things upon His Majesty's mind!—I, to be making them clear!

Why the only merit my conversation could possess in the estimation of a man like George IV., entitled to assemble round him the arch-wiseacres of his time, must have been its exemption from all connection with public business.—I was a *passetemps*,—a relaxation,—an interlude,—a rattle to please him,—a straw to tickle; and by pretending to be nothing more than the thing I was good for, continued to the last to tickle and to please.

Ridentem dicere verum
Quid ætat?

The great fault of favourites is presumption on their favouritism. Phædrus, Æsop, Pilpay, (which of them was it?) bequeathed us a clever example in the donkey who, jealous of his master's lap-dog, made himself disagreeable by jumping spaniel-wise upon his knee.—But if ever I write a string of apologues, *not* for the use of schools, but for the enlightenment of those dunces of second childhood, so much sillier than the dunces of the first,—I will

essay to prove that the petted lap-dog who pretends to utilize himself by wanting to carry panniers, is as great an ass as the other.—Every favourite has his specific purpose in his master's eye ; and George the Fourth was quite as little in want of the political counsel of a Cis Danby as he desired to see the carrots and turnips of his Julienne figure at his dessert, or slices of pine-apple floating in his spring soup.

It was the want of perception to discover this, that finally sent Jack Harris to Coventry, by means of place and a peerage.—People are apt to blame the caprices of royalty, and talk of King this or Queen that throwing off their friends.—But no one takes into account the blunders and impertinences by which favourites —(for between ourselves, dear Public, to talk of friendship between sovereign and subject is every bit as absurd as for the Emperor of the Celestial Empire to call cousins with the sun and moon), the molestations and impertinences,

I say, by which favourites cause themselves to be thrown over;—and it is not more unfair to find fault with a man for dismissing a drunken coachman, or a footman who chooses to give his notions upon parish rates instead of cleaning his plate, than to pass sentence of ingratitude upon a Prince who will not be flippantly answered, or bored with the political opinions of a Sir John Harris, K. A.B.C.D.E. F.G. &c. &c. &c.

One of those numskulls who presume to talk to the cobbler, and even the king of the cobblers, of his last, once congratulated Sir Walter Scott that he was about to visit Rome previous to the composition of a work embodying descriptions of the Eternal City.

“ I shall finish it before I set out,” was the reply of the mighty master ;—“ I can describe nothing on the spot.”

The man of master-strokes, was aware that life and landscapes require to be viewed at a certain distance, in order to reduce the objects they

contain to relative importance.—A fly crawling over one of the vast frescoes of Paul Veronese, might just as well attempt to play the critic upon its design, as A. or B. or C. to play the philosopher upon the event of yesterday. Time is the distance of moral life,—the perspective of the mind.—It is only now, seated in my easy corner at Crockey's, or by my fireside in St. James's Place, that groupings come out before my mind's eye, and trifles combine themselves into events which, when passing before me, were mere dots and lines, scratchings and daubings.

Provehimur portu, terræque urbesque recedunt.

My brethren of the Household were then only men who came in or went out of waiting, at certain epochs. I forgot that they were historical personages.—It did not occur to me that all the finished finicality of that golden clockwork constituted an epoch ;—a polished corner of the mighty temple of European civilization.

The first time it *did* occur to me was on noting the horror of the King at the prospect of finding a half-baked brick, or mass of unhewn stone placed next to it in the fabric.—Immediately after the Catholic Question, came Lord Blandford's notice of a motion for the consideration of Parliamentary Reform;—and though half the world seemed inclined to play Festus with the noble Marquis, accusing him of infirmity of mind or purpose, the other half trembled with the conviction that, within forty days, Nineveh would be destroyed.—We were at the beginning of the end !

“*Après nous, le déluge !*” is said to have been a favourite ejaculation of Louis XV., when admonished of the political reaction likely to occur in the times of his grandsons;—but let us not think so hardly of even one of the worst of the Lord's anointed, as to believe in the tradition.—Egotism, (or to write it puristically) EGOISM, in individuals a pitiful weakness, becomes a crime by regalization. The hardness

of a royal heart must accumulate the impenetrability of thirty millions of nether millstones; and an Aldgate pump for the dispensation of Hydrocyanic acid, or an Epping Forest of Upas trees for public recreation, would scarcely afford a bitterer source of national calamity.

My august Master contemplated, I am convinced, with profound sympathy, the downfall of the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. Court physicians are not always soothsayers or sayers of sooth;—and while bleeding and blistering, or whispering hints of this symptom or of that, seldom perceive the worm at the root which causeth the branches of the royal oak to wax yellow and wither.—I shall go to my own grave with the conviction that the King I had the honour to serve, was chilled to death by the shadow cast before by the coming event of the Reform Bill; and that Sir Thomas Lawrence, the most loyal of royal limners, preceded him to the tomb on the principle invented by

George Colman, who proved himself to be younger than the Prince because too polite a man to come into the world before His Royal Highness.

But I must not anticipate.—I was talking, if I remember, of the little importance I then assigned to my brethren of the Red Book,—whom, with the short-sightedness of human vanity and blindness of office, I regarded as permanent in their places as the giants in Guildhall; steady at their posts, albeit wooden giants, as the stone walls against which they are posted.—I liked most of them,—some to laugh *at*—some to laugh *with*:—I suppose no deeper motive need be adduced for the predilections of a coxcomb.

For one of them, for both these reasons, I entertained especial regard.—He was a pleasant sunshiny creature, equally ready to laugh or be laughed at,—some dozen years my junior, whom I remembered aforetime a page, and

now recognized as a legitimate inheritor of the honours of Cecil Danbyism.

Frank Walsingham,—for though the Red Book and his tailor recorded him in their pages as the Honourable Francis Walsingham, I trust I may be excused from such nauseous particularity,—was one of those unhappy individuals born ruined, as one may say,—a nobleman's younger son! Like myself, he had been Etonized,—though not like myself, Christchurched and rusticated;—and was consequently as useless and expensive in his habits as his elder brother, the heir in tail to forty thousand per annum.

In his case, unluckily, half a dozen young Walsinghams intervened between the eldest son Lord Rotherhithe and my friend Frank:—so that an Honourable Charles was in the Foreign office, an Honourable Edward in the Church, and the others hiving up knowledge in the Temple, and elsewhere, learning to spell their own name, previous to introduction into

official life. Frank, the ornamental one of the family, had literally nothing to trust to, in order to maintain the extravagant habits he was acquiring in his present appointment.

Neither he nor I, however, judged it necessary to be further sighted than his family and friends.—He was the pet of the court while in waiting, and the darling of the Exclusives when out of waiting ; and never did I see a young fellow so general a favourite. He was merry without being noisy. A gleam of perpetual sunshine brightened his joyous eye ; or if clouded by the moisture of a passing tear, the rainbow created by that rare refraction was indeed an emblem of peace. Man, woman, or child,—no one was proof against the fascinations of Frank !—

He had but one fault, the consequence of this happy temperament and universal favour ; —he was a *Cupidon déchainé*. People talk of a hard drinker, or desperate gambler,—Frank Walsingham was a hard flirter. It was no

fault of his,—he was to the manner born. I have shown that *I* reached Oxford without any thing amounting to an *affaire de cœur*. But I am convinced that Walsingham must have coquetted with his nurse, and scribbled billet doux on the blank leaves of his Barbauld's Lessons.

Frank was as well qualified for his vocation by nature, as I, by art.—His long black lashes and large grey eyes acquired, when he chose, a look so sentimental, that in accompanying his sixpence to a beggar at the crossing with—“poor woman!” or a pitiful glance,—he seemed to be giving utterance to one of those exquisite sentiments seldom emitted in real life, or any where else, but the well-gilt pages of an octavo volume.—Even in the days of courtship which preceded my days of courtiership, I wanted, I fear, the charming *laissez aller* of Walsingham.—*He* appeared to love for the sake only of the woman he loved,—I, for my own;—and so fervent was his ordinary manner, that he

could make the agreeable quite as agreeably to half a dozen charmers in succession, as other men to the one idol at whose feet they exhale the whole incense of their soul.—Like a portrait whose eyes appear to follow the person who gazes upon it, his heart seemed always at the service of those who wished it. Because never in earnest, he always seemed so. His gallantry was purely superficial,—the result of good spirits and good humour; and thus secure from the variabilities of deeper seated emotions, was ever ready for a flight.

I wonder, now, how I could be so fond of Frank, who was a phenominal reduplication of myself.—Perhaps I fancied myself divested of a dozen of my superfluous years, by associating with a young fellow of twenty-two:—for I was arrived at the time of life when one shrinks from the company of one's contemporaries;—and the round shoulders of Sir Moulton Drewe, or the bald crown of Mereworth, were disagreeable remembrancers of our progress in a

career, of which it cannot be said that it leaves not a wreck behind.—

Mereworth, by the way, attempted, after the fashion of the Cæsars, to disguise *his* baldness by a crown of laurels.—His speeches had almost as much influence in the Upper House as my brother's in the Lower; not as being of the same quality or calibre,—but because the sober, fluent, expositious manner with which long habits of official life endowed the Earl, answered better with such an auditory than more impressive bursts of eloquence.—For the Peers of our time were not as the Peers of Chatham's:—and the country-gentleman aristocracy looked to Mereworth as its Solon.—

His speeches I knew only by report,—the report of the Clubs, not reporters' report, for I am no speller of debates.—But it was by experience I found that a hogshead of heady port, such as Mereworth's light conversation, was the very thing to make one thirst for the high-flavoured Rhenish of Danby, or a glass of Frank Walsingham's sparkling Champagne.—

Not to speak it profanely, it was poor Mereworth's small talk which enlightened me to the truth of the three St. James's Street degrees of comparative dulness,—“stupid,—damned stupid, and a Boodle.”—

Now, Lord Mereworth was of Boodle's!—

CHAPTER X.

In the most high and palmy state of Rome,
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,
The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead
Did squeak and gibber in the public streets;
Stars shone with trains of fire, dews of blood fell,
Disasters veil'd the sun, and the moist star
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands,
Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse.

SHAKESPEARE.

Ut in vitâ, sic in studiis, pulcherrimum et humanissimum
existimo, severitatem comitatemque miscere, ne illa in tris-
titiam, hæc in petulantiam excedat.—PLIN. EPIST.

THERE is no moment in the history of a country, when, if a man with lungs strong enough to make himself heard, or diction vigorous enough to make himself read,—choose to announce by speech or pamphlet, that the “CONSTITUTION IS IN DANGER,” he may not terrify a considerable number of old women out

of their wits, so as to obtain a vote of want of confidence in ministers,—or a shower of dutiful addresses from cathedral towns, acquainting the Sovereign that he has lost his head, or that the premier deserves to lose his'n.—

But in every crisis thus arising, whether from the emancipation of Catholics or Niggers,—enfranchisements of Commerce or Conscience,—a strife of words, or a strife of Croesuses,—whether Swing or O'Connell be the bug-bear, or starvation or riot the order of the day,—the politenesses of London life proceed unmolested.—Like a passing breath on any other surface of polished steel, society shines the brighter for that momentary obscurement.

Let whatever seditious meetings distract the kingdom, those of Epsom, Ascot, and Newmarket are true to their day;—and though the military be called out to save Bristol from burning, Wormwood Scrubs must have its field days, and Hounslow its reviews.—Exhibitions open, and Caledonian balls cut capers, let the

Session rave as it listeth :—and even the autumn of that unquiet year was as diversified as usual by the petty pleasures which, by their agglomeration, render the lives of the great as distinctly brilliant on earth, as the *Via Lactea* in the sky. —But that decency required the Danby family to wear its broad hems with discretion, neither Lord Ormington who had lost a wife, nor Cecil who was in expectation of obtaining one, need have looked graver than usual.—

I had judged it necessary to place my confidence in my brother previous to despatching my formal proposals to Jamaica ; and by him had been dissuaded from consulting his father. —In case of acceptance, Danby undertook to make such arrangements as would place the principal of the fortune secured to me by my mother's settlements, at my disposal ;—in case of non-acceptance, there could be no occasion to annoy Lord Ormington.

For, to my great surprise, Danby, though approving my conduct under circumstances so

peculiar, disapproved of the connection. He, so liberal in feeling, so enlightened in mind, encrusted by the prejudices of birth as a noble frigate by barnacles, repudiated the idea of the marriage of the heir presumptive of his family, with a nameless West-Indian, almost as much as that of his father with a canting intrigante.

I plead guilty to the weakness of finding my passion increase, in exact proportion to his disparagement of its object. I was proud of rising superior in liberality of views, to a man whose superiority I was forced to admit in all beside. Now that I am entitled to walk at a coronation, I think, as Danby thought *then*,—that providence purported the pairing of human pairs after their degree, as much as the pairing of inferior creatures after their kind;—and firmly believe the union of disproportional couples to be as unproductive of happiness, as those of the animal and vegetable creations are infertile of increase.

I am by no means ashamed of this natural progress of my opinions; for the human mind, like a Stilton cheese, ripens as it decays, and is valuable in proportion to its corruption. But I *do* blush to own how very tedious I found that autumn at Windsor, now that the ride to Sunning Hill had lost its attraction. I even grew impatient of my splendid slavery, to a degree that no one but the camarera Mayor of a Queen of Spain, after six months in the Escorial, could be made to understand. A gold fish panting in a glass bowl in the sun-shine, must lead a pleasanter life than mine; heart-sick as I was of abiding among those who neither spoke, looked, nor acted in a natural way:—for “six weeks of varnished faces” is a state of primitive simplicity, compared with the falsifications of people, *plus royaliste que le roi* performing four and twenty hours of the twenty four, a concert of falsettos, a never-ending *menuet de la cour*!—

Our usual measure of mutual hypocrisies

was just then out-Judassed by the antipathies arising from political dissensions; which we were obliged to conceal like the Spartan's fox under our cloaks, smiling only the more graciously for that inward begnawing.—

At such periods as that last gasp of the expiring institutions of feudalism, the newspapers of the day suddenly start up in stature like Jack's beanstalk, or Jack in the box. Like sea-birds, roosting quietly in crannies of the rocks in quiet weather, no sooner is the political sky overcast, than one finds the air beaten by sudden flights of gulls; which, innocuous though they be, at such a moment appal like an omen, portentous of raging waves and the wreck of some gallant vessel.—

To fellows enjoying, like ourselves, the utmost beatitude of boredom, with only the vista of the Long Walk, and the flapping of the Royal Standard on the Round Tower to vary the daily scene, the leading articles of the day were so many field-pieces, through whose

brazen mouths we made upon each other the war we dared not make through our own.

The puffing influence of newspapers upon the public mind, in modern times, somewhat resembles the closing and opening of the Temple of Janus in times of old.—We pin our faith in the country, in the month of January, upon an oracle we derided, in St. James's Street, in the month of June. While domiciled in the centre of the Clubs, we split our sides at the inaccuracy of intelligence which, after the fifth milestone out of town, acquire an air of solemn authenticity : and at Windsor, not only believed in the lists of Departures and Arrivals, Bankruptcies and Insolvencies, but in the declarations of the Post that Britannia was smiling on a bed of roses, or of the Times that she was weeping over a bed of onions.—By the way,—I forget whether the Times were just then black or white,—Whig or Tory ;—the only fact indelible in my memory concerning the good old Times, being a certain

entry of one thousand pounds, much to its credit, in the account book of the Committee of Drury Lane Theatre, simultaneous with the début of the Times-honoured Edmund Kean.

“If any branch of the public administration were as infamously jobbed as the reviews,” wrote the late Earl of Dudley to the Bishop of Llandaff,—“it must soon fall a victim to the just indignation of the world.”—How could Dudley say so?—He who had been Foreign Secretary,—he, who had dabbled with the public journals, knew how well the world is pleased to be bamboozled by plausible print, or led by its long nose with the red hot pincers of editorial exaggeration!—

I am sadly afraid this bald disjointed chat of mine purports only to disguise from myself and my readers, the mortifying suspense which caused the contemplation of my private affairs to be just then more distasteful than is usually the case with what concerns that personal pronoun, which ought, according to Pascal, to be

obliterated from the vocabulary of every pious Christian.—

I,—with Pascal's permission,—was, I admit, perplexed in the extreme by Sophronia's silence.—I admitted having acted towards her in the first instance with hesitation and reserve; but her utter disregard of my humble excuses was almost too severe a measure of retribution!—Week after week elapsed,—the arrival of two Jamaica mails was duly recorded in the ship news;—but not a syllable from any member of the Vavasour family!—I now began to persuade myself that my happiness was bound up in the prospect of my union with my Nea. I betook myself once more to Tommy's Bermudian odes; and on two occasions, contrived to get expresses sent off to the Colonial office, for the purpose of ascertaining not whether “sugars was ris,” but whether any packet had been received for myself.—

Alas! the answer only came too soon.—Early in January,—just as we were playing the

fool with New year's gifts and Twelfth cake,— a packet sealed with black was placed in my trembling hands!—

I am not sure but it might look striking and catastrophic, and am very certain that it would save me a world of pain and pains, were I to fill up the remainder of the page with ranks and files of notes of admiration, or asterisks, after the fashion of Jules Janin and other oracles of the Prose-run-mad School;—those diminutive hippogriffs, who every now and then frighten the reading world into hysterics, like the bewildered astronomer who, with a fly in his telescope, announces that a fiery dragon is devouring the sun.—

But however anxious to envelope in mystery the sorry figure I cut upon this occasion, I am afraid my strange eventful history was too widely bruited abroad by the loquacity of my friend the Egham apothecary, for the utmost hieroglyphicism of the press to avail me the redemption of my character.—

I will tell my tale, therefore, in the simple language of an oracle far more oracular ; premising that neither Greysdale nor his father-in-law deigned to notice the communications I had addressed to them.—

The portentous letter sealed with black was from Sophronia, and couched in the following terms.

“ Greenville Plantation,

Nov. 24, 1829,

“When I tell you that a week only has elapsed since I laid the head of my sister in the grave, you will understand the cause of my delay in replying to your communication. You will also, I trust, comprehend the impossibility of a single expression of gratitude on my part, for the tardy justice you have done me.—

“In accusing you as the cause of my sister’s untimely end, I do not pretend that we are altogether blameless.—When accident brought us acquainted, thirteen months ago, we ought to have known, we ought to have felt, that no

good could arise from the cultivation of an intimacy, whose foundations were of sand.—Hard is it that my poor sister Annie should pay the penalty of my infatuation! Yet when I look to the prospects of my future days, I feel that, in the end, I, who was most to blame, shall have most to suffer!—For the principles in which I was reared had inspired *me* with profound contempt for the heartlessness of your class. I had been warned of their want of principle—their want of humanity. Yet with all my boasted wisdom, it needed only for one so specious as yourself to dazzle me by refinement of manners and graces of person, to make me forget my father's lessons—to make me renounce my previous disdain!—With my own hands did I blindfold my better judgment;—and the result is such utter bankruptcy of the heart, as renders it difficult for me to address you even these hurried but necessary lines.—

“Whether your proposals be dictated by a

sense of mercy towards my sister, or regard for myself, it is now useless to inquire.—In marrying you, I should give my hand to her murderer.—That you could leave me, seeing, as I am persuaded you did, the sincere affection which you had spared no pains to call into existence, without one word expressive of your intentions, without one line from Paris to alleviate the affliction produced by your inexplicable absence, is a sufficient evidence of the self-possessed hardness of your nature, to convince me that, even if the dying bed of my sister did not oppose an insuperable obstacle to our union, I could not be happy as your wife.

“ Oh! could you only know how much she had to suffer!—Pure as the angels of Heaven, —Annie was exposed to all the obloquy awaiting the most infamous of her sex!—This, at least, was your doing.—*You* knew the habits of England,—the forms and usages of its society.—You saw our ignorance of the evil-

interpretation to which we must be subjected by your visits. Yet you came and came again—with what intentions your own conscience can best apprise you ; then, left us without a word,—flung us aside like a worn out garment ; and when the brilliant Cecil Danby was heard of again, it was at the feet of another woman,—another,—and the wedded wife of another !

“ At that moment, Sir, my sister had been all but sacrificed by the impetuosity of a man who loved her as his life, yet less than his honour.

“ Pity him, and pity *me* !—Pity my poor heart-broken father, who is now sitting beside me, cursing the day in which he confided two daughters so young and inexperienced to the tender mercies of English society.

“ Farewell.—Could I hereafter permit myself to recur to days that have proved so fertile a source of misery to me and mine, I might, perhaps, dwell with regret upon the sudden blighting of illusions, which for a moment pro-

mised to make this barren earth a world of happiness. But for the remainder of my life, and the sake of those to whose consolation I must devote myself, I banish the past for ever from my mind.—Imitate my example.—It will need no great effort for one so worldly as yourself to forget that you were ever acquainted with two fashionless, obscure, and nameless women,—one of whom is already your victim, —while the other prays, in the utmost sincerity of heart, for release from a life you have rendered wretched.—Again I say, farewell !

“ S. V.”

I drew a very long breath after the perusal of this sad letter,—a breath so long as nearer to resemble a heavy sigh than altogether became the coxcombry of Cecil Danby

Still, I was not weak enough to fancy myself so much to blame as Miss Vavasour harshly announced me.—No ! I was not responsible for the infirmities of Mr. Greysdale's temper

or Mrs. Greysdale's constitution. If the indifference of my reputation had lent a false colour to intentions pure and holy, the calumnious dispositions of the world had most to answer for. The brute of a husband who could so readily listen to slander of one of the most charming and chaste of women, would have found some other Cassio and some other Iago to move his detestable susceptibilities, had there been no Cecil and no gossiping Sunning Hill in the case.—Annie was evidently predestined to a miserable destiny, and early grave.

“After life's fitful fever,” and the yellow fever, “she slept well.”

It was clearly myself,—again begging pardon of Pascal,—who was most to be pitied.—It was *I* who was sacrificed on the occasion. A lovely girl, of exquisite sensibility, and the finest touch on the piano I ever heard,—a lovely girl, with sterling sense, and fifty thousand pounds sterling, admitted having been sincerely attached to me; yet now, positively rejected me as a husband,

because she had a monster of a brother-in-law, and a sister of hectic constitution!—I confess I was bitterly mortified, and somewhat indignant;—a sincere mourner for the fate of poor Annie Greysdale,—and a sincere mourner for my own.

My sole comfort consisted in the decisive manner in which Sophronia and her family had cut short all further communication between us.—In such affairs, matters ought to be brought to a full stop. Commas and semicolons only constitute a painful and lingering death: and colons have been voted out of the syntax of Cupid, from the days of Richardson's novels.—Brevity, the soul of wit, should be the soul of courtship.—I like *my* love passages to be terse as Tacitus.

All that it was necessary to explain to Danby on the occasion was, that my suit was unprosperous. I knew he had too much delicacy to push his enquiries further:—and would naturally attribute my being out of spirits, to being

out of humour,—the natural consequence of being in love :—

In amore hæc insunt omnia.

I remember, however, having the precaution to take Frank Walsingham with me to dine in Connaught-place on the day I had to announce this piece of intelligence to my brother, by way of check to any questions he might be disposed to hazard on the subject. And by the way, that was the first time, (evermore accursed be the day in the kalendar !) he ever saw my niece.

I might have spared my trouble.—Danby was engrossed by the event of the day, the sudden death of his friend Lawrence. — Perceiving that I was disposed to be incommunicative concerning the manner of my rejection, he was very willing to drop the subject,—and his attention was soon afterwards as anxiously directed towards the gradual inflammation of public opinion through-

out Europe, as mine was engrossed by the dangerous illness of the King.

For it is not to be supposed that Danby, who, scarcely emerging from boyhood, had foreseen through the progress of European opinion the downfall of Napoleon, should have remained blind to that far more ostensible development of public feeling, which was communicating itself as by an electric chain from capital to capital, dethroning in France and Belgium the Sovereigns who attempted to repel with an iron hand the tremendous fluid which has its origin among the phenomena of Heaven ; and unseating in England an administration which had flattered itself of being able to maintain, in the open daylight of enlightenment and truth, the same hocus pocus deceptions, effective enough by the light of perfumed tapers and amid the velvet draperies of the court of an Exclusive King.

Danby had been among the first to unharness himself from the yoke of Toryism, the

moment he perceived that its iron share was about to be driven over the naked breasts of the people.

Cassius from bondage did deliver Cassius.
Nor stony tower nor walls of beaten brass,
Nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron
Can be retentive to the strength of spirit,

which, nurtured in childhood on rightful principles, acquires in manhood the force to perceive that they may be rendered, by untimeliness and misappropriation, principles of wrong!—But, as Seneca says,—“*transcurramus solertissimas nugas!*”

CHAPTER XI.

Within the hollow crown
That rounds the mortal temples of the King
Keeps death his court : and there the antic sits
Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp.

SHAKSPEARE.

Si paulum potes, illacrimare.—HOR.

Quantaque quam parvi faciant discrimina motus :
Tantum est hoc regnum quod regibus imperat ipsis !

“REVENONS à notre Vvintsorre!” as St. Evremont, in his letters to the Duchesse de Mazarin, spells the name of our country-seat of royalty.—

“*Pour qui les connait,*” says a clever French writer, “*les sentiers valent mieux que les grandes routes.*” “It is only by those *unacquainted* with them,” quoth Cecil Danby, (a clever English writer), “that the highways of life are preferred to its by-ways.”

Of all wearisome expositions, the existence

of the statue on its pedestal must be the most tedious:—of all human isolations, the eminence of a solitary throne the most depressing—Even in health and happiness, a Sovereign, in a state of single cursedness, is but a crowned Robinson Crusoe, and without his Friday. But when sick and sorry, and he begins to perceive that the sympathy of those around him is mere grimace,—

Earth's fruits grow bitter ashes in his mouth,
And where he lays his head to rest, is strewed
With scorpions!—

George the Fourth was exceeding sorrowful, even before the commencement of his sickness. The death of a noble member of his household, an honest man whom he loved and whose end was involved with events inexpressibly grievous to the King, combined with the languor of coming illness to depress his spirits;—seeing which, the melancholy frame of mind into which I had myself fallen, recommended me more than usually to his Majesty's favour.

I confess I was thoroughly discomfited.—The unnatural excitement in which I had sought refuge from the shock of Lady Ormington's death, the worry produced by my long suspense touching the decision of the Vavasours, was giving way to a sullen consciousness that the better half of my allotted threescore years and ten had evanished, leaving me neither better nor wiser ;—the more attractive gloss of mind and body wearing away,—unattached and unattaching,—standing alone,

In mezzo del cammin' della vità,

like Stonehenge, — in the midst of Salisbury plain, — a temple whose worship is obsolete, — desolation before, — dreariness behind.

No wonder that the King, gratified by the doleful expression of my countenance under such impressions, should prefer my attendance to that of others whom he better loved, but who for the lives and souls of them could not conceal their impatience of the dulness of the Castle under such circumstances.—

I was with him much,—I was with him often. The world, however, I mean the plaything world that surrounded us, was mistaken in supposing me to be the depository of personal secrets, important as regarding the welfare of eminent individuals and the mighty schooling of mankind.—Had it been so, I should have made no reference to the subject.—But it was *not*; and I hazard the allusion only in proof that a single royal whisper is sure to be prolonged by such an endless iteration of echoes, that it might eventually come to pass for one of the orations of Demosthenes, or the seven hours' speeches of Lord Brougham.—

I see that the Public is beginning to look inquisitive; but were I to gratify its curiosity at the cost of propriety and honour, all I should have to relate would amount to little:—like those hieroglyphical inscriptions of Egypt, which, after two dozen centuries have devoted their valuable time and erudition to decypher-

ment, and the expenditure of whole battalions of Savans and the extinction of a few hundreds of learned academies in the attempt, — are finally resolved into mysteries about as important as “Ptolemy the son of Ptolemy dedicated this temple to the worship of the goddess Isis, in the year when the waters of the Nile rose two feet and a half above their usual level.” —

I would fain pass over in respectful silence the illness and death of the King. — Monarchs who renounce the crown and sceptre for a hat and cane, are rarely successful in wearing their hat and cane with the ease of private life, or accomplishing its cordial friendships and domestic affections. The roar of the lion, though dormant, is too much an object of awe to be thoroughly forgotten; nor can the hand entitled to sign a death-warrant or confer a pension, ever be pressed in the disinterested fervour of spontaneous attachment. — Some among us were sincerely concerned for the loss of a good master; some, sincerely concerned for the loss

of a good place ;—and not a few, deeply appalled by the substitution of funereal draperies and escutcheons for the festoons of joy and festivity, so recently adorning St. George's Hall.—I saw them terror-struck by the startling facts of sickness,—death,—embalmmment,—burial.—They had not imagined that any reality so real could touch the person of Majesty.—The last Sovereign numbered with the dead under that regal roof, had long been civilly deceased ; and more than one worldly trifler among my companions was so accustomed to the deceits of bulletins, and to believe that, as the Woolsack confers infallibility in law, the Presidency of the College must confer infallibility in physic, that they would not believe his Majesty to be in danger, till the proclamation of King William. With such people, Time and Death are allegorical things, good to figure in marble on a stately monument with a scythe and hour glass in their hands ; and though admitting kings to be “ *sigillatim mortales*,

cunctim perpetui," they believe *the* King to be immortal.

The 26th of June arrived, and George IV. was released from suffering;—the 15th of July arrived, and Cecil Danby was released from servitude.—The vail of the temple of worldliness was rent in twain!—

Posterity,—who sits like Justice Midas in his arm chair, deciding upon the merits of Pol and Pan,—assigning to sovereigns the place they are to occupy in Lord Mahon's continuation of Smollett's continuation of Hume, and the panegyrical discourse of the waxwork showman in Westminster Abbey,—must decide whether the hearty cheers which hailed the substitution of a flag that had braved the battle and the breeze for the embroidered folds of the purple banner of Pleasure, had any deeper origin than the enthusiasm which invariably accompanies the semi-serious cry of "Le Roi est mort—vive le Roi!"—

For in the commencement of every new

reign, as in the dawn of a new day, the hopes of the public rise, lark-like, warbling and carolling to the skies ;—while the close of a reign resembles the evening twilight, where the melancholy bat, Disappointment, is alone astir; preparing to retreat to the rafters of the old barn of Time, to fold its leathern wings in darkness and the shadow of night.

One thing is certain.—The domestic position of the new King threw open wide the palace gates, not alone to the pomps, and dignities, and decencies of a female court,—but to the manifestation of those domestic affections which, by uniting the sovereign and his subjects in a more intimate union, diminished the isolation of the throne. Windsor Castle became an ant-hill of Fitzclarences, and

One touch of nature made the whole realm kin.

The jealousies of the aristocracy had laid in a prodigious stock of contempt for the illegitimate family of the King. But such was the

kindliness and personal merit of those sentenced to unpopularity, that the moralists forgot their cut and dry cant of the mischief of precedents in such cases; and emulated the indulgence of a Queen, whose virtues entitled her to exercise, in this instance, one of the fairest prerogatives of her sex.

What a curious transition in the history of English palaces, from the hyper-refinement of the most heartless of epochs, to the cordial simplicity of the new court!—It was so long since the voices of children and glee of young mothers had resounded in those gilded galleries, that Nature seemed to take delight in chasing out the formal train of Art from the precincts wherein she had so glaringly predominated.

Never shall I forget the impression produced upon my mind when, a month or so after the decease of my royal master, on waiting upon the King to deliver up certain papers which it was indispensable should pass from my hand to

his own, I saw a joyous train of nurses and children disporting on the sunny slopes;—and heard the natural intonation of human voices, with

Ladies' laughter coming through the air,

where formerly the hum of the honey-bee was alone audible.—People laughed and talked and walked *there* as elsewhere.—I could scarcely believe myself at court!—

At the close of my audience, the King asked me to “take my mutton with him!”—I stood transfixed. The ceremonial of embalming at which I had here been forced to preside, did not half so forcibly convince me that Kings were as other men, as this apostrophe. If the extreme courtliness of the last court were excessive, I am not certain that this reverse of wrong was right.—But between the too much and too little pageantry of courts, let Lord Chamberlains and Lord Mayors' fools determine.—That day, I made my parting bow to Windsor.—I doubt whether the Castle have

since beheld an obeisance executed with a thousandth part so much urbanity and grace.

Already, the movement mania was beginning. —Scarcely had the echoes of the Park and Tower guns ceased over the grave of George IV., when the *mitraille* of Paris became audible. —The whist and shooting parties of Charles X. were strangely interrupted by an outburst of popular indignation such as might well renew the famous dialogue between Louis XVI. and the Duc de Liancourt—“*Monsieur le Duc, c’est donc une révolte?*” “*Non, Sire!—c’est une révolution!*”—But what importance has that fearful word revolution since acquired in the ears of Kings!—However, on this occasion, Regicide France condescended to take example from Protestant England; and Charles X. was dismissed as contemptuously as James II.—

It was not, however, the fortunes or misfortunes of Charles X. that now distracted my attention. Nothing could exceed my embarrassment at the coolness with which the

Duchesse de Dijon, on arriving in England with the La Bélinayes, in the suite of the royal family, wrote to announce her intention of a visit to Ormington Hall.—

To propose such a visit to Lord Ormington, even had I been in Danby's position and he in mine, would have been totally useless ;—for to own the truth, the deportment of the emigrants of the Court of Louis XVIII. towards their English protectors, was of a nature to account for the very small number of them who judged it expedient to follow the royal family a second time into exile.—But for *me* to request the hospitality of Ormington Hall for one of the most objectionable accomplices of the levities of my unfortunate mother, was wholly out of the question.—

I was obliged to project a new tour to the Continent to get out of the scrape of doing the honours of England to people who little deserved them.—But I must do this justice, *en passant*, to poor Clémentine, (to whom I hastened to offer the succours really at my dis-

posal,) that the most devoted of wives could not have borne her reverses more heroically.—Redoubling in respect towards the man whose name she bore, lest others in his adversity should render him conscious of his personal insignificance,—though doubtless secretly blushing for the incapacity which, in the recent crisis, had distinguished the conduct of the most idiotic aide de camp of the most *cretin* of masters, she never allowed a syllable of blame to escape her lips.—“Vive le Roi—quand même!”—was still her device;—exemplifying that gallant but blind and dangerous loyalty of the old aristocracy, which tended only to harden the hearts and weaken the throne of the elder race of Bourbons.—

I spent a few hours with the family, facilitating the arrangements of their journey to Holyrood;—and among other inquiries relative to the startling events of the Three Days, which had not yet achieved the honour of being called glorious, ventured to ask whether my portly

friend Monsieur le Comte de St. Gratien were among the captured fugitive Ministers of the abdicated King?—

Clémentine replied by a wondering smile:—her mother, the Duchess, by an inquiry where I had been living to be thus ignorant of the state of Parisian men and things.

“Are you not aware,” interrupted Madame de la Bélinaye, “that poor St. Gratien shares with Judas Iscariot and Prince Talleyrand the palm of arch-treachery,—and that he is surnamed the harbinger of revolutions?—Two months ago, he retired from the administration:—and was one of those who proceeded the other day to Neuilly, to propose the throne of France to the Duke of Orleans.”

“As vicegerent of the kingdom, of course, a fidei-commis for the Duc de Bourdeaux,” said I;—“perhaps the best service that could be rendered by so faithful a servant of the King.”

Madame la Duchesse de Dijon took an impatient pinch of snuff!

“ Should you pass next winter in Paris, mon cher Monsieur Danby,” interrupted Monsieur de la Bélinaye, in a piteous tone, “ instead of seeing the head of St. Gratien fall with those of Polignac, Peyronnet, Chantelauze, and Guernon-Ranville, you will find it crowned with a tri-coloured cockade,—and your friend Madame la Comtesse, in all probability, a lady in waiting !”

“ No, no ! you do her injustice !” said I—recalling to mind her devoted attachment to Madame ;—adding to myself, in an under tone,—“ *faut il que cette pauvre Thérèse soit toujours incomprise !*”

I had but one more inquiry to make ;—and I confess it was not without the hope of discovering further treachery among those who ought to have rallied round, not the *panache blanc*, but the tri-cornered hat of the Jesuit King, instead of the tri-coloured flag of his opponents.

“ *Et ce cher Vicomte ?*”—said I,—inferring that, as Clainville was not of their party, he was of the *partie libérale*.

“ *Ah! ce pauvre Vicomte!* ”—cried La Bélinaye, shrugging his shoulders, “ He was very unfortunate !”

“ Unfortunate, indeed !” — responded the Duchess, with another pinch of snuff.— “ He who might have been killed at the Trocadero, —or even the other day in the attack on the Louvre, the Carrousel, the Palais Bourbon, as others were,—he, who might have fallen *en bon gentilhomme* on the Place de Louis XV. by a musket ball, as his father did before him by the guillotine,—was actually slaughtered by the lowest vulgar of the populace, while leaving the Marché des Innocens with despatches for the Hôtel de Ville !”—

“ Despatches which he had undertaken to convey in my place,—for it was to me they were originally intrusted by the Duc de Raguse !”—faltered the Count in a dolorous voice.—“ But he was always the most obliging fellow in the world !—He would have sacrificed his life for me or Clémentine. To be sure, he was our cousin-german.”

“ Only figure to yourself, *mon cher Monsieur Danby*,” resumed the Duchess, “ that the bodies of the victims were interred indiscriminately on the spot where they fell ;—and that the Vicomte de Clainville, representative of a *noblesse* of the first crusade,—is lying *pêle mèle* with a horde of *forts de la Halle* and *gamins de Paris*, in a common grave, over which the butterwomen of Paris will spread their filthy merchandize, for centuries to come.—*Ce brave garçon,—ce pauvre Vicomte,—cet excellent Clainville !—Quel sort—quelle infamie !*”

While listening to all this, I stole a glance towards Clémentine ; and perceived that, though silent, she was much paler than usual.

I had not before noticed that she was attired in family mourning.

CHAPTER XII.

Upon a full sea are we now afloat,
And we must take the current while it serves,
Or lose our ventures.

SHAKSPEARE.

Finesse, artifice, mystère,
Détours, vaine subtilité,—
Politique en chose légère,
Ménagée avec gravité.
Soit à parler, soit à se taire
Air de suffisance affecté.

ST. EVREMONT.

AND thus had the prognostications of my brother been categorically fulfilled!—The boa constrictor *had* roused itself from its lethargy to crush the despotism of old Europe within its coil. The stillness *had* given way to a storm, whereof the thunders still growled in the distance, while the foreground was encumbered by livid heaps of dead.

France was awake,—Belgium was awake,—and their sovereigns were fugitive before the

face of the people. England was now awakening.—What was to be the result?

The Tory party declared its incompetency to defend the throne, by advising the King to refrain from a promised visit to the good city of London. Riots ensued—further dangers impended ; but the good feeling of William IV. and good sense of the Duke of Wellington ceded to the pressure of the times,—and the capital was preserved from insurrection.

Such was the preamble of the Reform Bill. Of the personal refinements and mental acquirements of the King, it would require the tongue of a Sir John Harris to speak in terms of laudation. But let the honours of a warm heart and conscientious mind abide with the memory of William IV. ; by whose concessions, the country was secured from a revolution, and the cause of Civil and Religious Liberty advanced more surely than by the precipitate enfranchisements of all the revolutions in the world.

I hate to scribble about politics.—Nine days in ten, one's dinner is spoiled by hearing them discussed;—and the wisdom of parliament, (like ghosts, a thing more talked about than seen,) might really spare one the trouble of speechifying on paper. Before, however, I resign my crowquill once more for a plume plucked from the downy pinion of Cupid, let me be permitted to say that I rejoiced heartily in the change of men and measures.

Almost every change of Ministers effects some good. The Constitution, if allowed to walk always with the same leg foremost, shuffles on and makes little progress. It is only by an alternation of the right leg and the left, the Whig party and the Tory, that the body politic is held in equilibrium!

A man was now lord of the ascendant, who was accounted lordly even among lords. Lord Grey, like his royal master, was a happy accident. So long as *he* retained the helm of Government, the baffled Tories had no plea for

raising an anti-democratic panic,—nor could the Exclusives whisper the damnatory epithet of “vulgar,” which they applied without ceremony to the new Court. The Earl was too fine a specimen of the liberalized noble of the nineteenth century, to run any risk of involvement in the rabble of the radicals.—To carry the Reform Bill, it was indispensable to throw dust in the eyes of those possessed of privileges to renounce; and the dust thrown by the hand of so well-bred a man was thrown with such stern suavity, if one may use the expression, that they mistook the refuse of the street for sands of gold.

Among those in whom this dust, whatever its quality, produced decided ophthalmia, was Lord Ormington. Thwarted through life in almost every bent of his nature, unable among the free-and-easy habits of the times he had survived to, when even the most pig-tailed of elderly gentlemen are exposed to the bantering of their coterie and badgering of their club, to maintain the moated and ramparted reserve

of his earlier years, he was like some old fortified town, whose walls have been plucked down and fosses filled up and planted,—looking grimly cheerful and formally easy through the young plantations growing up under its venerable nose.

One by one, all the strongholds of his Toryism had been demolished by the powerful arm of his son.—It was like the devaluation of some venerable traveller in a farce. First his coat was torn away,—then his doublet,—eliciting convulsive grimaces from the victim, and laughter from the spectators. And now, to have to utter the “ay” which was to place his darling borough of Rigmarole in Schedule A!—Since the days of Abraham, no such sacrifice had been demanded of a parental heart!—

Danby however was triumphant; and as Ariosto says,

Fu il vincer sempre mai laudabil cosa
Vincasi o per fortuna o per ingegno.

His father's conversion, and his own magnifi-

cent speech, were among the memorabilia of Parliamentary Reform; and though Lord Ormington's old protégé Droneby, who had been long mitred, passed his old patrons with a formal bow, or swept his lawn sleeves disdainfully past them in the House, I trust both father and son had strength of mind to survive the animosity of the Right Reverend grandfather in God.—

I cannot enter into the position or sentiments of such a man as my brother. To be the head of a class, as I was, is a very different thing from being the leader of a party; and though my inherent self-reliance never left me half a second in doubt as to the eligibility of my plans or rectitude of my principles as the first dandy of my day,—I sometimes feared that even my brother's firmness might not be altogether proof against the insolence of those former colleagues, who denounced him as a recreant and a renegade.

Toryism is but the principle applied to poli-

tics which in philosophy lighted the fagots for Galileo.—Those fellows would have burnt my brother if they could. They *did* burn him in effigy. But burning in effigy constitutes, I believe, one of the indispensable honours of political martyrdom, preparatory to canonization.

If these brewers of mischief could have had their will, they would have raised the waters of strife so high in the land, that the Ark of Reform should eventually find no peaceful Ararat whereon to anchor.

I was prevented from realizing my projected trip to the Continent that winter, by the unquiet state of England. Lord Ormington's Lancashire estates were in a most disturbed condition; and Danby, between his attentions to his father and the exigencies of the Session, was compelled to absent himself so frequently from home, that he was desirous I should take up my residence in Connaught Place. He was aware of my objections to Hanover Square.—It was perhaps as a pretext to afford me a com-

fortable home, in lieu of the noble one I had lost, that he suggested the plan as an act of grace towards himself.

Jane was now in her sixteenth year, and only nominally under the jurisdiction of a governess.—She took the head of the table, unless on occasion of political dinners; and adopted from earliest childhood as her father's companion and friend, was as conversational and well bred, as she was pretty and pleasing.—Among the frequenters of my brother's house, her prettiness and pleasingness went for little. The contemporaries of Lord Ormington cultivated as guests by Danby for his father's sake, —the artists and men of science and letters whom he protected,—even the party men with whom he was inextricably amalgamated, took no further thought of a little girl in a white frock, than my poor mother's dowagers in Hanover Square used to take of the stuffed figure of Bihiche;—and I remember that, one day when Frank Walsingham, having called

to fetch me to dinner at White's, and found Jane sitting with me over the fire, made some inquiry about her age, I felt annoyed at being forced to admit that I had a niece so nearly approaching towards womanhood!—

I was beginning to grow touchy on the score of age; and though aware that young Chippenham, Mereworth's son, was entered at Oxford, and though, alas! certified by a still more disagreeable remembrancer of the follies of my Foreign office days that nearly twenty years had elapsed since I became a man of wit and fashion about town, I still chose to believe myself, what the eyes of the more discriminating sex assured me I remained—

Beau, brillant, leste et volage,
Aimable et franc comme ou l'est au bel age!—

I was still more angry when, at intervals, Frank chose to return to the charge.

“Child, if you will,” he was pleased to say, in allusion to Jane,—“but she has all the sense

and feeling of a woman.—It is the most highly finished miniature I ever beheld!”—

“Jane is a good, little, quiet thing,” said I, waspishly, “who, half a dozen years hence, may be worth looking after. Miniatures, my dear Frank, are at best trivial things. Come with me, and I will show you one of the finest gallery pictures of the day.”

And I took him with me to Lady Brettingham’s, whose husband had been batched in the last baking of Baronets, in gratitude for his friendliness to the Catholics and enmity to Boroughmongers,—as per haunches of venison and saddles of mutton demonstrated.

Through all that stormy session, Lady Brettingham had been progressing into importance, by the steady support afforded to the Liberal party, by the excellency and frequency of her political dinners.—“Give me a spot to stand on,” said Archimedes of old, “and I will move the world.”—Give me a good dinner table to talk at twice a week, and I will per-

suade any man, not of Clumber-ous extraction, out of his opinions.

On entering the House of Commons, or even sitting down to a ministerial banquet, a public man puts himself on his guard,—stoppeth his ears with wax like the wise Ulysses,—and like a stock-broker in a swell mob, thrusts his notes into an inner side-pocket.—But to a well furnished, well established house, like that of Sir Julius and Lady Brettingham, he comes unarmed;—he feels privileged to resign himself to the enjoyment of excellent entrées, and the wine so much more likely to be meritorious when the master is his own taster, than where one lies at the mercy of a clerk of the cellar.—Smiled at by her Ladyship,—coaxed by Sir Julius,—diverted by the wit and humour of a Mr. Merriman, whom he little suspects to be the Editor of a leading journal, the country member listens without mistrust.—Spectacles are adjusted to his eyes, nay, the operation of couching is performed so pleasantly, that he is

not aware of it; nor is it till the question comes to be debated, a fortnight afterwards, and, brightened by the arguments which have been seething and fermenting in his mind, like Sir Francis Wronghead in the play, "he cries *AY* when he ought to have cried *NO*,"—that the influence of a Brettinghamian dinner becomes apparent.

"Let who will make the laws of France, so I have the making of her songs!"—said one of those best aware of the influence of wit over a French imagination.

"Let who will give the law to London," say I—"so I am allowed to invite her to dinner."—The stomach is her vulnerable point; and for one measure carried at the point of the bayonet in England, fifty have been enforced at the point of the spit.—The truth is that our domestic cookery is so very humdrum,—and our plain cooks are so very plain, that any digression into a fairer field becomes dangerously attractive.—Such viands as those of Sir Julius

and Lady Brettingham were fatal to the anti-reformers, as the insane root of Egypt to the legions of Antony.—

I am not sure, by the way,—for I love to dive into the root of a mystery,—whether there may not have been miching malicho in John Murray's ten thousand editions of Mrs. Rundell!—All the abominations concocted in those peppered and salted pages, may have been, after all, but a profound Metternichism of the Tories to expose the appetites of the nation to the temptations of official gastronomy!—An Emperor of China would perhaps condemn the designing bibliopole to be hashed into small pieces and tossed up in a ragoût, for a crime of this nature, so far more heinous than the importation of opium;—for no one can doubt that, after going through a severe course, or three courses of Mrs. Rundell, Cincinnatus himself would sell his birth-right, or his borough, for a mess of Potage à la Reine.

Danby was too apt to underrate the influence

of such party accessories. Like all really great men, Danby despised that which was ingenious in action, as he avoided all that was paradoxical in discourse.—There was not a cranny in his brain,—a fibre in his heart,—for any thing but TRUTH.—It was the simplicity of an Ionic Temple!—

Frank Walsingham, as I expected, was amazingly taken by the pleasurable of the Brettings' house.—He had not yet travelled, and consequently was not aware that it presented only a pale imitation of Parisian society. Luxury and grace employed as arabesques and gilding to disguise the unsightliness of political and official life, constituted its charm.—One met cleverer men there than at other pleasant houses; and prettier women, than at other bureaux d'esprit.—

I was puzzled to guess what induced Lady Brettingham to welcome my friend Frank with such very open arms; for we were alike obsolete as a full bottomed wig, without so much

influence *now* at the Pavilion or in Stable Yard, as would have promoted a turnspit.—But after listening twenty minutes to the tone of her bland cajolery,—of which cypher, experience had furnished me with the key,—I saw that he was a mere vestibule to the door at which she wanted to knock; his brother, Lord Rotherhithe, being one of the sunken rocks over which the Brothers of the Trinity House of Reform, had set up a buoy.—

Rotherhithe was at present a dark horse:—no one as yet quite understood Rotherhithe.—He was one of those who are clever enough to hold their tongues; and a silent bird enjoys in the aviary the benefit of a doubt whether his notes, if he *did* choose to sing, would be those of the nightingale or the crow.—He was supposed to think the more for talking so little; and his party were sadly afraid that all his thinking might end in having an opinion of his own.—There was a sort of cool intractability about him that excited their alarm.—A man

who fancies himself wiser than his neighbours, is apt to be tempted by the charm of prohibition, to break out into opposition to his family politics : and whereas all the Walsingham tribe were stiff anti-reformers, there was every probability that the one word which Rotherhithe *did* allow himself to speak, might afford important support to the Liberal interests.—

Such a piece of proselytism was worthy the hands of Lady Brettingham. Rotherhithe was the sort of fellow I detested.—I hate a silent man.—Much has been said of the weariness of talking to the blind ; but what is the vacuity of a countenance irresponsive to your efforts, compared with the reserve of a soul that gives no sign of sympathy ?—

I thought it right, however, to afford some hint to Frank of the nature of Mariana's projects ; for it is a pardonable malice to circumvent the manœuvres of a woman who has been insolent enough to take one for a dupe :—

Walsingham was too much in conceit with

himself and the world to be angry with either her or me.—

“Is *that* her line of policy?” said he, laughing. “Then, by Heaven, I could find it in my heart to gratify her by bringing Rotherhithe (against whom I have just now a brotherly grudge for making my father preserve his pheasants against his younger sons,) to her house.—Ro. has a nervous horror of having salt dropped upon his tail, either in matters of love or politics.—He is terribly afraid of being swallowed alive as a *parti*,—or by a party.—It would be great fun to see the vote-hunt.—I should like to get Landseer here to paint it:—a new edition of terrier and rat.”

“At all events, our fair friend has good white teeth to show,” said I. “Do not, however, punish your brother at the risk of a vote to the good cause. If you think him undecided, bring him rather to Connaught Place.—Danby seems to possess the magic power of solidifying a morass by planting his foot upon

it.—I hardly ever saw a timid mind resist the closeness of his reasoning, or the perspicuous simplicity of his language.—Nothing vague,—nothing inconclusive.—By assigning bounds to a question, he is able to elucidate every obscure corner, so as to satisfy the misgivings of people whom the mysterious nature of an argument ending in the clouds, overpowers with nervous terror.”

“Your arguments, my dear fellow, are almost too cloudy for me!” cried Frank, laughing. “But if you know your own brother, you don’t know mine; and I can tell you that if I wanted to assist the Reform cause with his vote, I would tie him down for the next six weeks to the society of my father’s set,—who would probably argue him into opposition.”—

I could almost understand this myself; for I swear there were moments when the truisms of that most common-place of common placemen, my old friend Lord Mereworth, inclined me to inscribe on my banner, “Let Old Sarum

flourish.”—Mereworth was one of those very slow coaches who resume every question from the epoch of the deluge ; and waste one’s time and attention by proving what nobody disputes ; a man born a century too late.

Pereant qui nostra ante nos dixerunt !—

An acquaintance of some standing with my brother had luckily somewhat enlarged his political views ; and the solemn respectability of his air, diction, and condition, consequently rendered him valuable as a stone roller to smooth the surface of the noble road projected by abler engineers.—

I spent a good deal of my time at his house in Grosvenor Square.—It was one of those clockwork establishments which do credit to the orderliness of the Order.—The early musical predilections of the Mereworths seemed to have trained them to habits of keeping time and tune ; --for the punctuality of their house and engagements was regulated with the exactness

of crotches, quavers, and demi-semiquavers. Not a variation in their hours, or epochs of coming to town or leaving it, from the days when I yachted with them in the Mediterranean, till now.—

It was perhaps the monotonous tranquillity of these modes of life which caused the hours, thus admirably disciplined, to pass unfelt over the head of Lady Mereworth.—The serenity of nature which had rendered her eyes so inexpressive twenty years before, at Maybush Lodge, caused them still to wear the same invariable and mildly pleasing expression.—Mereworth was already a middle-aged man,—bald and prosy ;—I, worse,—for I did not love to show myself in public without a considerable expenditure of time and Delcroix in getting up. But Lady Mereworth looked almost as young as ever ;—

Time had not thinned her flowing hair ;
her skin was still transparent as porcelain ;—
her brow still smooth as the verse of Rogers.

Just then, when almost every house one entered was rabid with politics,—a porcupine's nest of contending principles or interests,—it was agreeable enough to take refuge in that sleepy drawing-room of hers; and find her always seated on the same soft sofa, with the same soft smile, and the same soft worsted work in her lap. It was like contemplating a *Calm* by Vandervelde, after the billowy, foaming, frothing, rock-rending, pine-splitting cataracts of *Ruysdael*;—a moral lullaby,—a *Riposo* in a land of *Canaan*.—

In Connaught Place, they talked too much sense for me; elsewhere, too much nonsense.—Lady Mereworth possessed a sort of mezzo termine evenness of discourse, that called for no exercise of thought or feeling to attain its level;—the female counterpart of Mereworth's sober mediocrity.—What a charming companion for an indolent man in sunny weather!—What can a fellow desire more, after being

chattered to death in the House, or at his club,—distracted by the rattle of a dice box, or drumming of an orchestra,—than to find a perpetual smile and gentle voice welcome him to a snugger, where not a discordant sound or sight has leave to enter!—

I no longer wondered that my friend Mereworth had turned out so domestic a man.—They had no daughters to engage the attention of the Countess;—their sons were at school;—there was nothing to divide with him the attention of

The kind fair friend by nature mark'd his own.

Deeply impressed by the charm of his domestic sanctuary, I was never weary of returning to the contemplation.—I used to make my appearance in Grosvenor Square every day, at the same hour, to enquire whether Mereworth were gone down to Boodle's or the House;—and usually remained listening to his wife's

answer in the affirmative, till, an hour or two afterwards, her carriage was announced.—It seemed a matter of course that I should come. It seemed a matter of course that every thing in that house should become a matter of course.—My daily visits were only a portion of the routine of the establishment. — The porter started up to open the door the moment my cabriolet entered the square. In a very short time, I dare say the door would have opened of itself.—

I was not molested by much rivalry. Lady Mereworth was too indolent and too home-staying to disturb herself with keeping up the system of morning visiting that renders many houses in London as public as a bazaar; nor was there much attraction in a gentle quiet woman of seven and thirty, to the dashing legions of guardsmen, or other idlers of the same capacity.—I had it all to myself.—I was amazingly happy!—

How different the even tenor of a gentle sentiment like this, from the distracting alternations of a passion the very quintessence of which resides in sighs and torments,—*spasimando spasimar*,—which finds no rhyme for heart but dart or smart :—a zephyr to a sirocco,—the Bay of Naples to the Bay of Biscay, O !—“ *Ut maris tranquillitas intelligitur, nullâ, ne minimâ quidem, aurâ fluctus commovente : sic animi quietus et placatus status cernitur, quum pertubatio nulla est quâ moveri queat.*” —

I trust my readers are conscious of the clever circumbendibus by which I have contrived to make it manifest, without actually announcing so unpleasant a fact, that the dangerous vivacities of Cecil the coxcomb were subsiding ;—*i. e.* that I had attained my fortieth year.—

I shall be extremely obliged to the junior branches of my readers to refrain from a smile. —Walter Scott did not become a poet till he

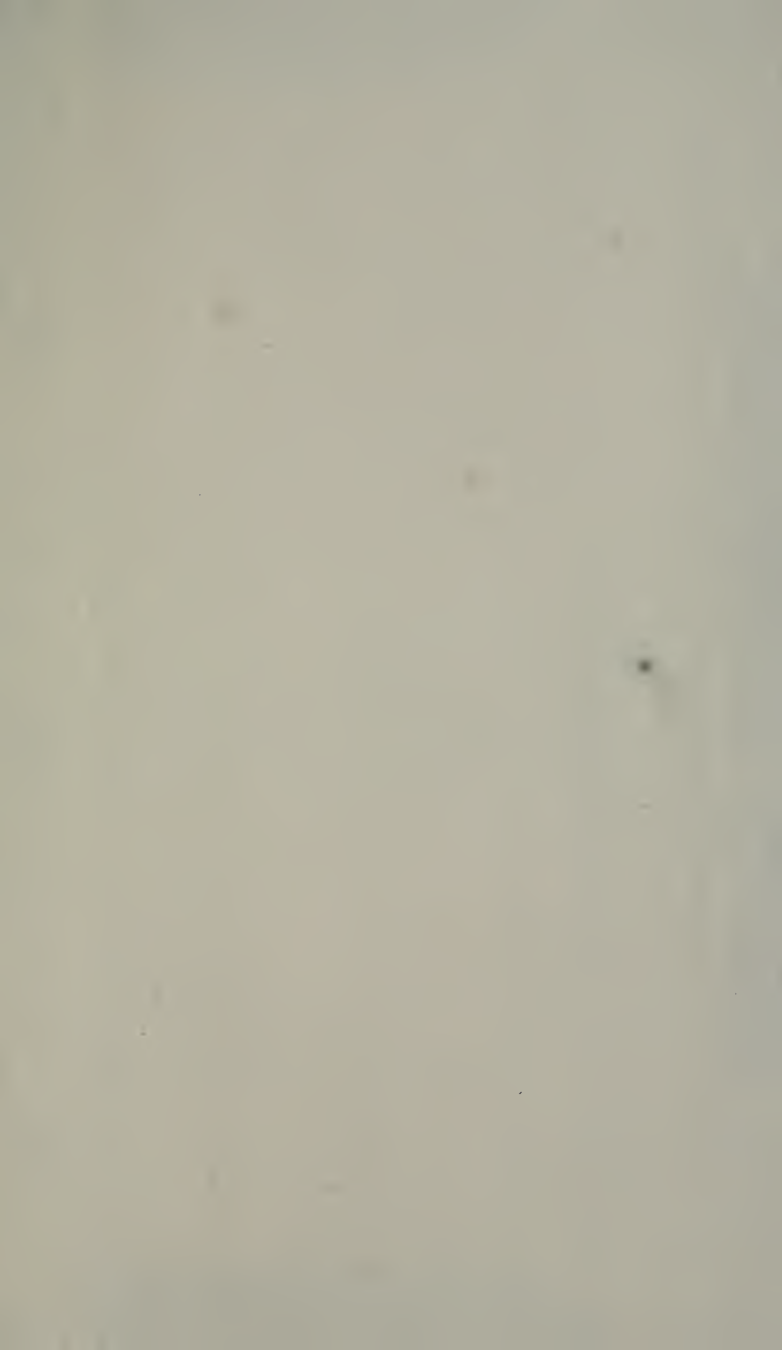
was eight and twenty : — it would be invidious to specify which of the mighty conquerors of the day, became a Lovelace at forty-two ! —

END OF VOL. I.

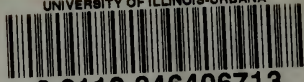








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